THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

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By Sir Edward Parrott, M.A., LL.D.

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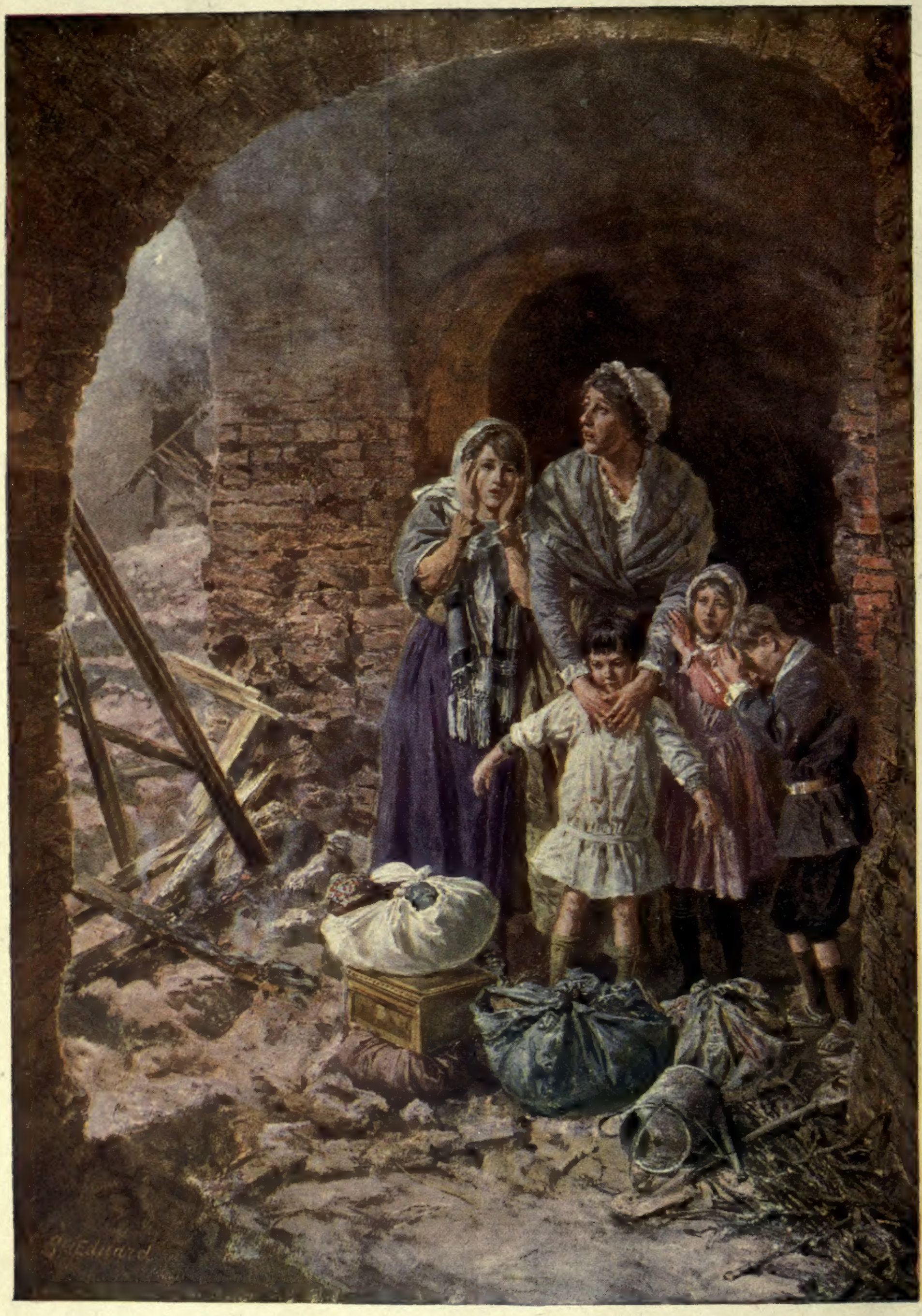

Refuge—1917.

(From a painting by S. Edwards.)

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THE
CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

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BY

SIR EDWARD PARROTT, M.A., LL.D., M.P.

AUTHOR OF "BRITAIN OVERSEAS," "THE PAGEANT
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE," ETC.

The Last Five Months of the Year 1917.

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SENDING.

When as of old the Spartan mother sent
Her best beloved to the perilous field,
One charge she laid upon him ere he went:
"*Return, my son, or with or on thy shield.*"
Even so we, with anguish unrevealed
By eyes o'er bright and lips to laughter lent,
Sent forth our men to battle, nor would yield
To tears by pride's fierce barriers hardly pent.

So when they fight and all the world goes red,
No memories athwart their souls shall come
That might unman them in the hour of need,
But such brave glances veiling hearts that bleed
As those old mothers turned upon their dead
On comrades' shoulders borne triumphant home.

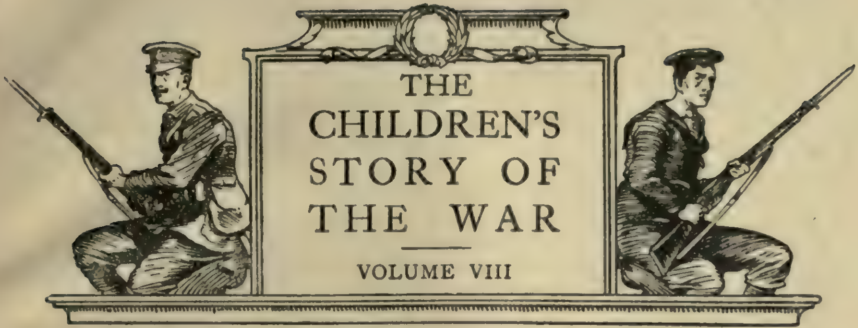
The late LIEUTENANT A. L. JENKINS.
(*By kind permission of Lady Jenkins.*)

CONTENTS.

I. After Three Years 1
II. How we began to push out the Ypres Salient 17
III. Soldiers' Stories of the Battle 33
IV. The Battles for the Ridges 49
V. How the Canadians won Hill 70 and closed in on Lens 65
VI. The German Peace Offensive 74
VII. In the Gulf of Riga 81
VIII. Verdun once more 93
IX. The Battle of Malmaison 97
X. The Bravest of the Brave.—I. . . . 101
XI. The Bravest of the Brave.—II. . . . 113
XII. The Bravest of the Brave.—III. . . . 129
XIII. An Italian Success 140
XIV. Disaster and Recovery 145
XV. A Stout Stand 161
XVI. The Fall of Gaza 167
XVII. The Capture of Beersheba, the Fall of Gaza, and the Advance on Jerusalem . 177
XVIII. Jerusalem through the Ages.—I. . . . 189

CONTENTS.

XIX. Jerusalem through the Ages.—II. . 193
XX. The Fall of Jerusalem 199
XXI. The Capture of Passchendaele Village . 209
XXII. Sir Douglas Haig's Dispatch . . . 225
XXIII. The Supreme Award of Valour.—I. . 241
XXIV. The Supreme Award of Valour.—II. . 257
XXV. General Maude's Last Dispatch . . 263
XXVI. The Battle of Ramadie . . . 273
XXVII. The German Submarine Campaign . 279
XXVIII. Hunting the Sea-Jackal . . . 289
XXIX. Submarines, Convoys, and Naval Raids 305
XXX. The Gateway to the Valley of the Scheldt 316
XXXI. How we smashed the Hindenburg Line 321
XXXII. The Battle of Cambrai . . . 337
XXXIII. A Glorious Stand 353
XXXIV. Barring the Way 357
XXXV. Heroes of the Victoria Cross . . 365
XXXVI. Sir Douglas Haig's Cambrai Dispatch . 369



THE CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE WAR

VOLUME VIII

CHAPTER I.

AFTER THREE YEARS.

THERE is nothing more interesting than to follow a river from its source to the sea. High on the hills swift rills rush together to form a torrent which goes leaping and sparkling down the steep slope, scooping out its trench-like valley, and sweeping away all obstacles in its path. At length it leaves the hill country behind, and begins to traverse wide, flat plains. It is now a placid stream, flowing onward steadily, but with none of that rush and foam which marked its earlier stages. As the journey proceeds the current grows feebler and feebler, and the slow-moving water spreads out into pools where it almost comes to a standstill. Then, when its energy seems exhausted, the ground suddenly falls away; the river rushes down to a lower level, gathers new strength, and sweeps forward, unchecked, to the sea.

A nation in the course of a long and testing warfare is apt to resemble the river which I have described. As the weeks lengthen into months and the months into years, as tens of thousands of homes are robbed of their bravest and best, as more and more sacrifices are needed, and as hardships grow in number and severity, the strong impulse that drove the people to battle becomes weaker and weaker, until there is a danger that war-weariness may set in, and the people may cry aloud for peace at any price. For a nation to grow tired of the struggle in which it is engaged before it has accomplished its purpose is to bring about its own ruin. At the first sign of faltering new heart must be put into the people, and no pains must be spared to reinvigorate their flagging energies. If they are to triumph, they must revive their will to conquer, restore their confidence, and gird up their loins anew. " He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

Now you are not to suppose from what you have just read that at the close of three years of stress and anxiety the British people were war-weary, and that their determination had slackened. They were as determined as ever to " carry on." But the Government thought it wise at the opening of the fourth year of trial to invite the people to throw their minds back to August 1914, and to reconsider the reasons which then made them draw the sword. It was thought that their ardour would thus be stimulated, and that it would burn with a brighter and clearer flame. Public meetings were, therefore, held all over the country, and the people were reminded of the reasons why they entered upon the greatest struggle in the history of the world. These meetings had an excellent effect. When, in the light of all that had happened since, we looked back to the beginnings of the war, we were more convinced than ever that our cause was founded on right and justice, and that we were treading the only path possible for a nation conscious of its duty and jealous of its honour.

What was the first purpose which we had in mind when we flung down the gage of battle? I need hardly tell you. We saw a little country, blameless in the eyes of God and man, suddenly assailed by a mighty nation which had sworn to keep it free from its foes. Germany had deliberately broken its plighted word, and had flung its armies into Belgium in order to make a sudden swoop upon France.* Every Briton worth the name feels himself instinctively drawn to the side of a little fellow assailed by a big bully. When we saw the big bully trampling the brave little nation under foot, slaying and torturing its people and burning and destroying its inheritance, simply because it dared to stand up in defence of its own, our pity and sympathy rapidly flamed up into hot and righteous wrath.

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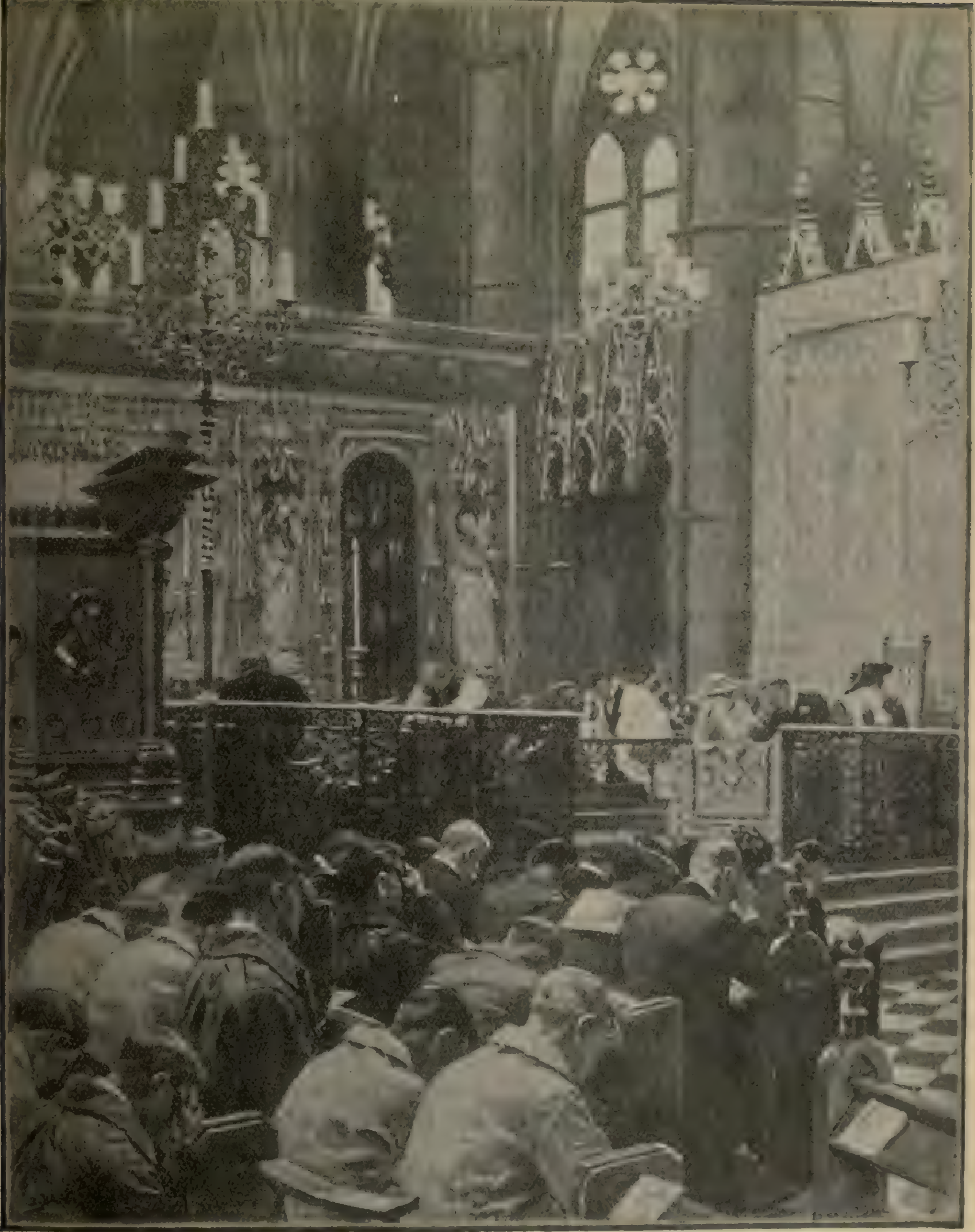
* In the course of a telegram sent to the President of the United States by the Kaiser on August 10, 1914, and not revealed until the early days of August 1917, the Kaiser said that the neutrality of Belgium "had to be violated by Germany on strategical grounds"—that is, in order to gain a military advantage over France.



In Westminster Abbey at the Opening of the Fourth Year of War.

(*From the picture by S. Begg. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

The beginning of the fourth year of war was marked by a solemn service of intercession at which the King, Princess Mary, Prince George, and Princess Victoria were present. The special prayers were full of sympathy for those who had suffered bereavement or were sick or wounded. "Unto Thy loving-kindness, O Lord, we commend all those who are stricken and suffering by reason of this war. . . . Bind up their wounds, O God."

But there was something more than pity and sympathy and righteous wrath to move us. We needed no eloquent statesman to tell us that unless nations remain faithful to their solemn engagements there can be no peace in the world and no civilized life. Britain has always insisted that nations shall be true to their bond, and that they shall not be allowed to break their solemn treaties for the purpose of gaining some wrongful advantage. Think what would happen in daily life if men were allowed to play fast and loose with their legal promises. Nobody could deal with them; all that trust and confidence upon which civilized life is based would be destroyed, and we should become barbarians once more. Men can only live together in a state of civilization when they can trust each other to keep their promises, or can compel them to do so. And what is true of the members of a civilized state is true of the civilized states which form the family of nations.

Now we, too, had pledged our solemn word that Belgium should never be invaded without just cause. Had we stood by and allowed the Germans to break their promise and work their wicked will on Belgium, we should have been partners in their crime. We could never again have held up our heads as an honourable nation. It was not alone Belgium that was at stake, but every other little nation in the world. Had the German crime gone unpunished, any other powerful and greedy state would have been free, at any time and upon any excuse, to fall upon its weaker neighbours and snatch their land and freedom from them.

Our first purpose, then, in going to war was to rescue Belgium from her invaders, and to restore her independence. After three years we saw the Germans still in occupation of all but a fragment of Belgian soil. We had striven hard, but we had not accomplished our purpose. The duty which we took upon ourselves in 1914 was even more binding upon us in 1917, for the enemy in the interval had shown the greatest inhumanity towards the unhappy Belgians whom he had enslaved.

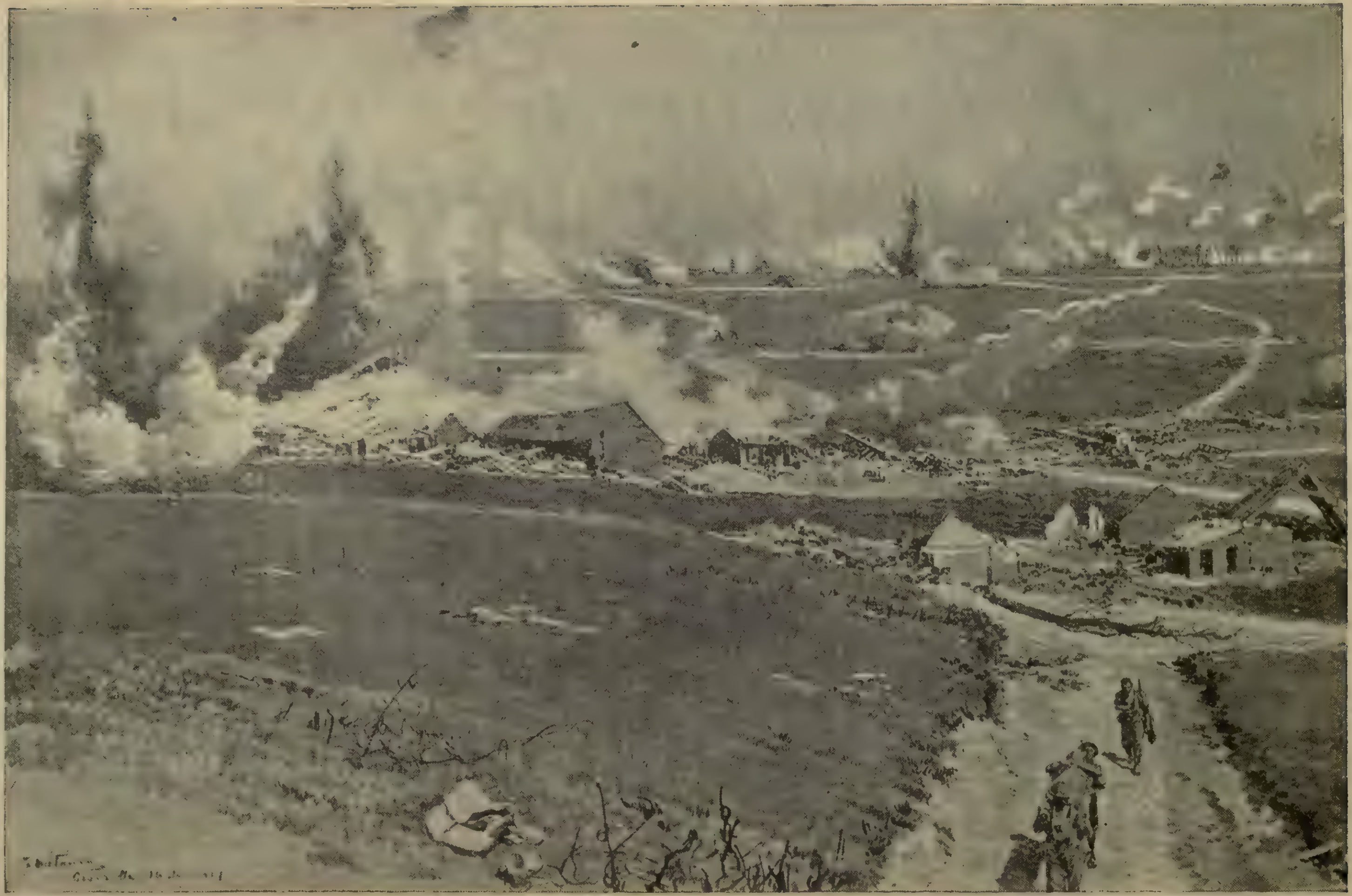
Our second purpose was to defend France. When the Germans invaded Belgium, it was clear that they meant to use it as a jumping-off ground from which to strike a sudden and overwhelming blow at France, and put her out of action for many years to come. Though we had made no treaty with

France, we had formed a strong friendship with her, and friendship has duties which no man can neglect without revealing himself as false and dishonourable.

When, therefore, the tide of German invasion swept from Belgium into France, our ties of friendship forced us to send an army to help to stem the torrent. It was only a small army which we were able to send ; but, for its size, it was the finest army which the world has ever seen. This little army covered itself with glory, and set an inspiring example to all who were thereafter to bear arms in Britain's name. Nevertheless, with all its gallantry it could not prevent the outflanking of the French forces, and so had to fall back with them almost to the gates of Paris. This grave reverse only stimulated us to multiply our armies with all speed, and to devote all our energies to the hard and costly task of driving out of France those who had profaned its soil.

At the end of three years of war the Germans were still in possession of the richest and most populous parts of industrial France. As you know, they were obliged to give up in the early months of 1917 some 600 square miles of conquered territory ; but before leaving it they laid it waste, cut down the fruit trees, poisoned the wells, and blew up the roads. Alsace-Lorraine, the provinces which had been torn from France in 1871, were still part of the German Empire. At the close of three years' war our duty of freeing France from the invader and of restoring these provinces to her were still unfulfilled.

Our third purpose in waging war was the liberation of Serbia. We did not begin the war with this purpose in view, for during 1914 and part of 1915 Serbia was able to defend herself. Austria, however, had set upon her in defiance of public right ; and though we had made no treaty with her, the same principle which had led us to go to the rescue of Belgium operated in the case of Serbia. You remember that in October 1915 she was attacked by Germans, Austrians, and Bulgarians, and her sorely tried army was obliged to abandon the country. It then became doubly our duty to liberate her. Her collapse was due to no lack of courage and determination on her own part, but to the faithlessness of King Constantine and to the base ambitions of the Tsar Ferdinand. Nor were we ourselves free from blame. We had made mistakes in dealing with Ferdinand, and we had failed at the Dardanelles.



Devastated France.

(*From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

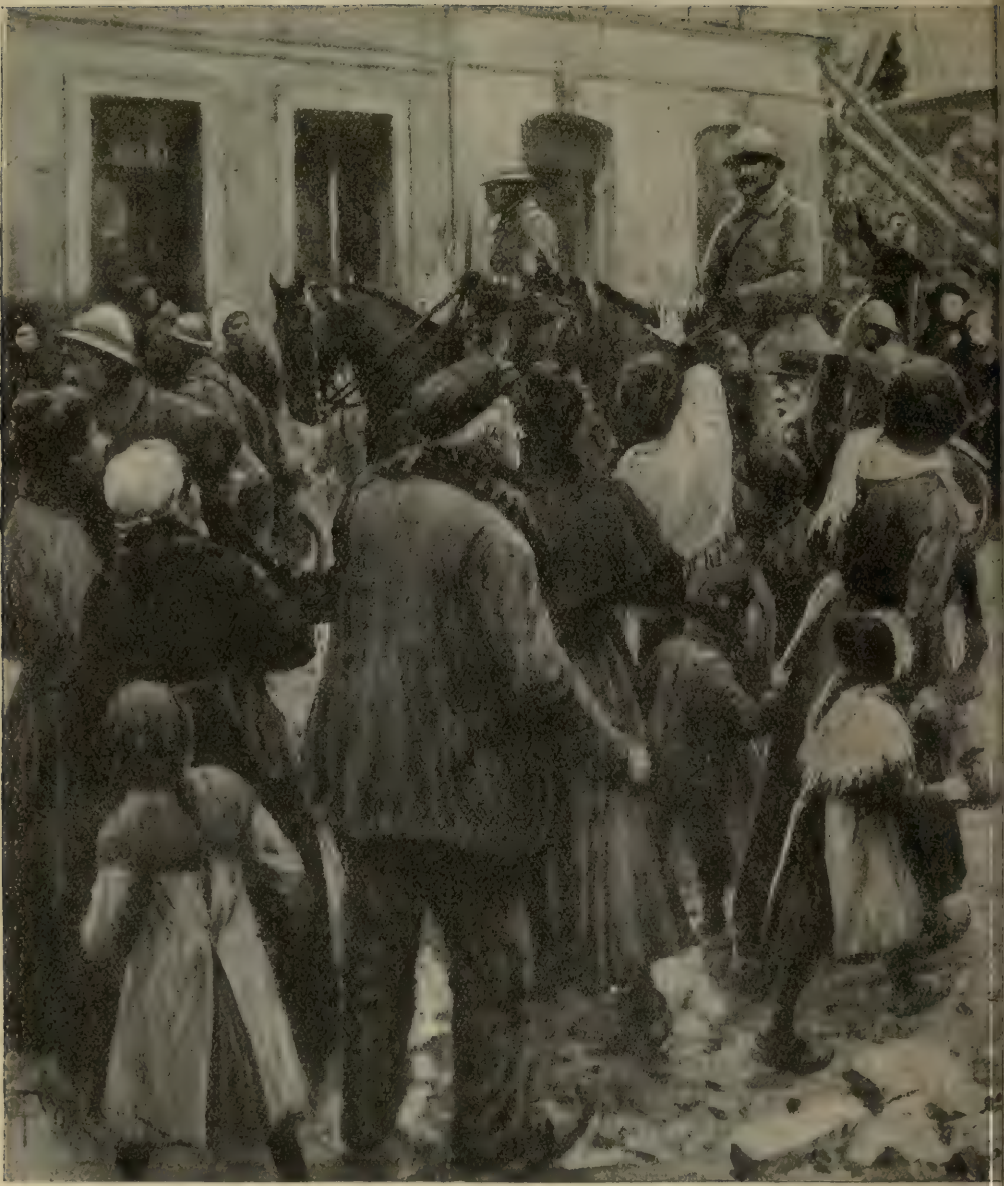
This picture shows the shelling of a village and the general havoc wrought by modern war.

At the end of three years' war Serbia, all but a small portion, was in the hands of the foe, and the poor people under the yoke of the conqueror were being treated with the utmost barbarity. We gave public pledges that we would not cease from strife until Serbia and Montenegro were free once more.

We undertook the rescue of Belgium, the defence of France, and the liberation of Serbia and Montenegro in order to right the wrong, to punish the Powers which had brought ruin and untold suffering upon these countries, and to prevent any other power from committing similar crimes in the future. We knew that the whole blame lay at the door of the military party in Prussia. "We shall not sheathe the sword," said Mr. Asquith, "until the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed."

After three years of war we saw this military domination still unbroken and undefeated, still powerful for the most terrible mischief. No one could doubt that the military caste of Prussia had long prepared to plunge Europe into war so that it could make itself master of the Continent, and therefore of the world. For long, laborious years it had given its nights and days to the secret preparation of a mighty military machine, such as had never before been seen in the world's history. It had carefully thought out its plans, and, as far as it could foresee, had provided for every contingency. It had established a remarkable spy system in every country, and had striven to stir up civil strife in all lands upon which it had designs, and it only waited for a favourable moment to leap upon its prey.

That moment came when a local dispute broke out between Austria and Serbia. The Kaiser and his military chiefs took over the management of the quarrel, with the express purpose of bringing about a European war which would enable them to reap the fruits of their long preparation. They succeeded, and their armies were in motion immediately. Their plan of campaign was to occupy Belgium and Serbia, to beat France to the ground by a sudden onset, and then turn and cripple slow-moving Russia. By bartering their conquered territory, and by exacting huge ransoms from beaten peoples, they hoped to increase their power to such an extent that for the future Germany would be supreme in Europe, and in a position to proceed to the mastery of the world.



The Day of Deliverance: dawn at last

(*From the picture by A. Forestier. By*

This picture shows you the inhabitants of a French town which, after many months of German bondage,
circumstances. No wonder old men, women, and children shed tears of pride

fter a long nightmare of German oppression.

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as been restored once again to the mother country. Try to picture what your own joy would be in similar nd gratitude as they see their own soldiers marching into the town as victors.

Not for the first time had such an attempt been made. You will remember that Napoleon actually made himself master of Europe, and that for twenty-two years, with intervals of uneasy peace, we waged war against him. There can be no better cure for war-weariness than to read the story of those twenty-two years of almost constant strife. When all continental Europe lay at the conqueror's feet, we maintained the struggle single-handed; and though food was scarce and terribly dear, and the sufferings of our people were almost beyond endurance, we fought on with desperate courage until the tyrant was laid low and Europe was free. We fought Napoleon for no other purpose than to preserve our national freedom. As you know, he tried to destroy our trade, and he attempted to invade our country. He occupied Antwerp, as he himself said, to aim a pistol at the heart of England.

To the aims and ambitions of Napoleon the Kaiser William had now succeeded. On August 3, 1914, Sir Edward Grey warned the British people of the great danger that would face them if the Germans should seize the Flemish and French coasts. At first, perhaps, we did not fear invasion, and we lightly regarded the threat to our freedom; but it soon became clear from books written by German soldiers and professors that the ruin of Britain was the most important part of the programme. And later on, when the Flemish coast was in German hands, and became a base for the submarines which preyed upon our shipping, and for the aircraft which made raid after raid upon our towns and cities, we realized that the menace was very real indeed. Before the war was six months old we knew that we were fighting for the preservation of our empire and all that it stands for.

It was not only in the West that Germany aimed at dominion. Her military caste had long prepared to secure the control of the Balkans and the Turkish Empire. Once these were in their grasp they meant to plant the German flag on the Persian Gulf, and thus stand on the threshold of India. They dreamed of a future German Empire which would stretch from the Baltic to Central Africa, and from the North Sea to Ceylon. The first step was to sweep away Serbia, the stubborn little Slav state which blocked the road to the South and East. Serbia was the obstacle to dominion in the East, just as Belgium was to dominion in the West. For this reason Serbia was first assailed, and then Belgium.

It was, therefore, to defend our empire, as well as to ensure the observance of treaties and to restore peace and liberty in Europe, that we set out to destroy the military domination of Prussia. After three years we saw that Power weakened, but we also saw it possessed of wide territory in Belgium, France, Serbia, Montenegro, Rumania, and Russia. Nevertheless, the German dream of empire in Africa and Asia had not been realized. Thanks to our armies in the south of Palestine and on the Tigris at Bagdad, there was no overland route for them to Egypt or India. Even so it was as clear as daylight that if the Germans were allowed to retain their conquests and combine them all into one great state, they would undoubtedly be all-powerful on the continent of Europe. The first step in the great scheme of world-conquest would have been successfully taken.

After three years we saw none of the purposes for which we entered the war fulfilled. But this state of things was only discouraging to those who did not look at the war as a whole. There was another and a brighter side to the picture. We began the war with an army so small in numbers that the Kaiser is said to have dubbed it "contemptible." But while warding off the enemy with one hand, we had worked little short of a miracle with the other. We had transformed ourselves into a military power of the first order; we had called all our men of military age to the colours; our dominions overseas had made our cause their own; and we had so organized our manufacturing resources that we were able to supply our six millions of troops with all the arms and munitions which they needed. Not only so, but the products of our factories had enabled our Allies to keep the field when otherwise they would have gone under.

In the third year of war a new ally, driven to arms by the faithlessness and treachery of Germany, declared war upon this enemy of mankind. Before the United States, with her large population, her almost inexhaustible resources, her great manufacturing power, and her vast wealth, had thrown in her lot with us, the Allies were superior in the all-important things —men and money—to the Central Powers. When the Americans entered the war, there was no longer any fear that the Allies could not outfight and outstay Germany and her partners, even though Russia should be unable to take the field for many months to come.

The Germans might gloat over the map of Europe, but they knew themselves to be sinking slowly but surely into exhaustion. Month by month, in France and Flanders and on the Isonzo, their troops were being flung back with heavy losses; and while their powers of resistance were thus being weakened, a great American army was arming and drilling so as to be ready to take its place in the field during the following spring. The very fact that Germany was feverishly striving to secure a peace which would enable her to ride off with her spoils, was clear proof that she knew that the hour was fast approaching when she could no longer retain them.

The Kaiser had promised his victorious legions that they should return bringing their sheaves with them "before the leaves fall." Three years of bitter struggle and suffering had gone by, and though the flags had waved and the bells had rung in Berlin for many a victory, the end seemed as far off as ever. All the brag and bombast that had marked the Kaiser's utterances during those first few weeks of the war when his troops were sweeping all before them had vanished. He no longer talked of conquest, but declared that he was waging a defensive war. He had, indeed, lost faith in his armies as the instrument of victory, and now centred all his hopes upon the submarines, which he believed would force Britain to give him peace before his land forces were exhausted.

By the end of the third year of war the German people had lost all their illusions. It was still possible for the High Command to announce victories in the East, but there was no longer any enthusiasm when they were bidden to rejoice. What the German people wanted was that victory which meant peace. They looked at the war map, and saw it German from Ostend to Warsaw, and from Hamburg to Constantinople, and they could not understand why their husbands, brothers, and sons were still called upon to fight, and why they themselves had still to suffer every kind of hardship. Something was wrong somewhere. It is said that on July 14, 1917, when the car containing Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff was passing down the Unter den Linden at Berlin, a throng of men and women barred the way with the cry, "Give us peace."

Not only were the people eager for peace, but by the close of three years' war they had begun to ask for a greater share in the government of their country. The ideas which had brought about the Russian Revolution had begun to work in Germany. When German Socialists went to Stockholm in the hope of coming to agreement with the Russian Socialists, they were addressed by M. Branting, the leader of the Swedish Socialists, as follows: "I believe that peace will be postponed as long as the present German rulers are governing—that is, the Kaiser and the ring around him who forced on the war, the Junkers,* and the military party." The Russian Socialists told their German comrades plainly that they meant to continue to fight until the military domination of Prussia was overthrown. The German Socialists were greatly impressed, and after his return to Berlin their leader, Herr Scheidmann, said: "It is not our enemies but our friends—alas! so few out there—who keep on repeating to us, 'The time has come at last when you must alter your home political conditions. You must show the outer world that the differences between you and it are not unbridgeable.'"

Meanwhile the Prussian people had been trying to do something to alter their home political conditions. They had been demanding that the old and unjust method of electing members of Parliament should be done away with. They had good cause to complain, for the system was so arranged that a hundred rich men had more voting power than two thousand poor men. The demand for reform grew so loud that the Kaiser could not shut his ears to it, and on July 11, 1917, he was obliged to promise that a better system of voting should be established.

Nor was this the only sign that the German people were discontented with their government. The Reichstag,† which has very little real power, and had never before dared to interfere in foreign affairs, also plucked up courage, and a majority

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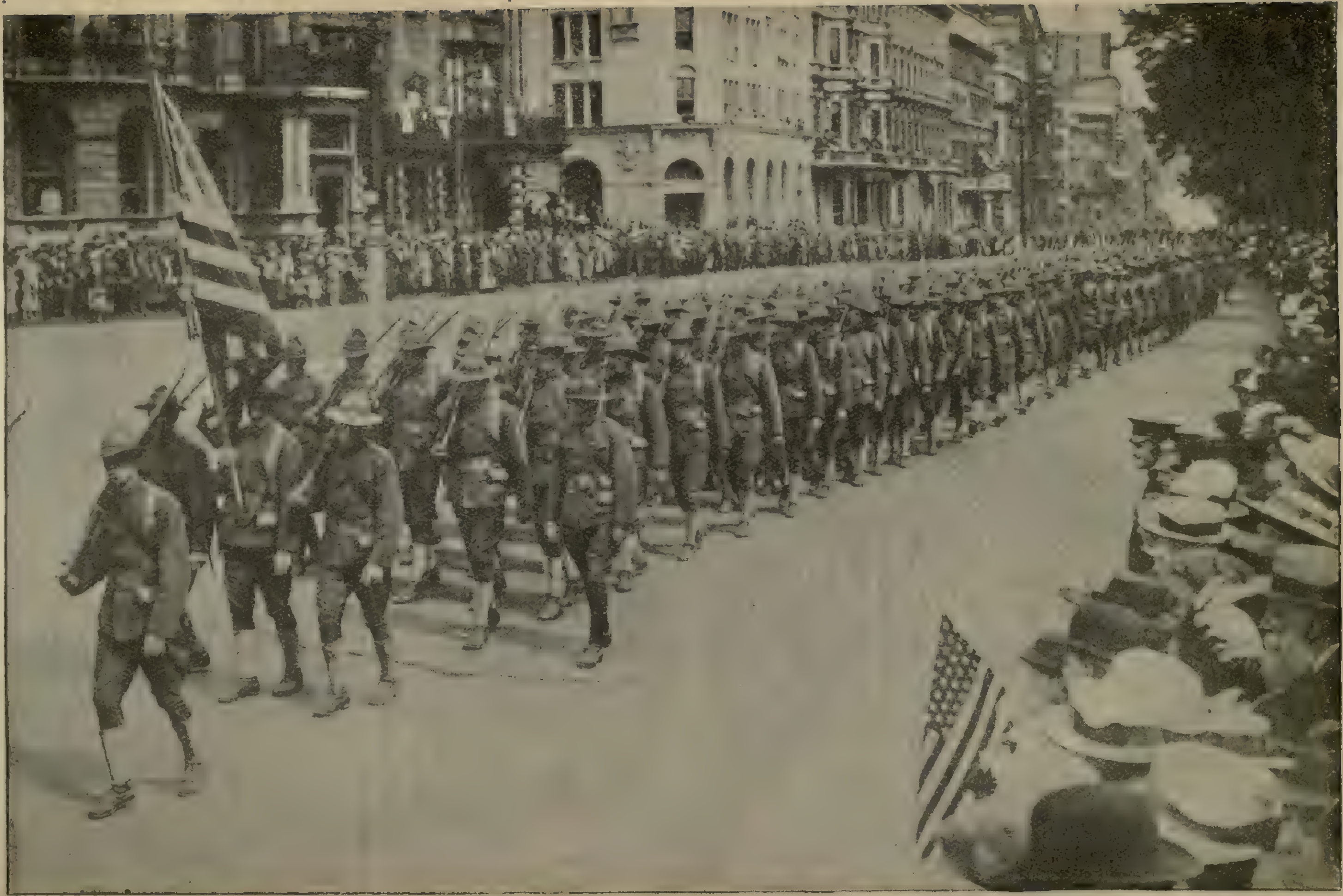
* The name given to the German landowning party which forms the governing caste, both civil and military, in Prussia. The party is said to number three million members. It was the chief aider and abetter of those who made the war.

† The so-called Parliament of the German Empire. It cannot remove ministers who do not possess its confidence, and it cannot alter the law without the consent of the Federal Council. It was invented by Bismarck in order to make the German people believe that they had a Parliament. Some one has called it "The World's most Tedious Debating Society."



For the first time in history, American Troops marching through London as Allies.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

This picture shows the American contingent marching along Piccadilly, behind the Stars and Stripes, on the way to embark for training and then active service in France.

of its members determined to pass a resolution setting forth Germany's war aims. Before they could do so, the Kaiser dismissed Bethmann-Hollweg, the man who had been Chancellor since the outbreak of war, and appointed in his place an obscure official named Dr. Michaelis. When the Reichstag passed its resolution, the new Chancellor refused to permit the conduct of affairs to be taken out of his hands. Next day the Reichstag was adjourned, as it always is when it becomes troublesome.

These political straws show which way the wind was blowing. They may not seem very interesting or very important to you, but they clearly show that the leaven of freedom had begun to work in Germany, and that the German people were beginning to think that the time had come when the rule of the Junkers and the military party should cease, and that they should possess those rights of self-government which all great nations enjoy.

In reply to the Reichstag's resolution, Dr. Michaelis put forward his master's conditions of peace in such a manner that nobody quite knew what he meant. The Allies felt sure that the Kaiser's terms of peace were those of a conqueror; that he meant to add to the German Empire all the lands which his troops occupied in so far as they might be necessary to secure his frontiers for all time. Mr. Lloyd George rightly dismissed the German Chancellor's talk as a "facing-all-ways speech"—the speech of a man who is "waiting on the military situation." It was quite clear that after three years' war the Kaiser was still unwilling to restore Belgium, the French provinces, Serbia, and Montenegro, and to pay for the injuries which he had done to them and their people.

The three years of strife had worked no "change of heart" in the German military party. The Kaiser and his highly placed soldiers believed themselves to be conquerors, and were only prepared to make peace on that footing. Every thoughtful Briton, even though he longed for the day when strife would cease, saw clearly that the leopard had not changed his spots nor the lion his skin. To make peace on German terms with the German military power still unbroken meant that in ten or twenty or thirty years' time the military chiefs of Prussia would be ready for war again with even stronger forces at their disposal than before.

While Germany was thus obstinate, the Austrians appeared to be willing to make peace at almost any price. The Kaiser and his friends had foreseen that the Austrians could not be trusted to hold out after years of stress, and they had taken good care to get the reins of army government into their own hands as far as possible. The Allies knew, as well as the Kaiser, that Austria was the weakest link in the chain of the Central Powers. At the close of three years' war, however, she had not been able to throw off the German yoke and make that peace which she so strongly desired.

After three years of war the words most common on British lips were, "Never again." The Prime Minister spoke as follows:—

> "A man in a very high and powerful position in Germany has said there will be peace shortly, but war will be resumed in ten years. That is their idea. This is the way they talk. They say: 'Well, there are many things we ought to have foreseen. We ought to have had plenty of cotton. Then we have made a mistake about submarines. Instead of having two or three hundred, we ought to have had at least two or three thousand. Next time—' *There must be no next time.* Far better, in spite of all the cost, all the sorrow, and all the tragedy of it, let us have done with it. Do not let us repeat this horror. Let us be the generation that manfully, courageously, and resolutely cut out war from among the tragedies of human life. Let us, at any rate, make victory so complete that national liberty, whether for great nations or for small nations, can never be challenged again."

In this spirit the British people faced the fourth year of struggle. By this time they had added another great purpose to those for which they had taken up arms: they were now fighting to put an end to war, the greatest tragedy of human life. They knew that until those who had made war their religion and organized violence their god were thrown down, even to the dust, there could be no reign of peace upon the earth. The longed-for peace would come when they saw the German Emperor—

"Fly by sacked and burning farms,
Fly by riddled windmills' arms,
In the nightmare and alarms
Of his pride.

"By the endless poplar lines,
By the trampled corn and vines,
In the crash of great designs,
Let him ride."

CHAPTER II.

HOW WE BEGAN TO PUSH OUT THE YPRES SALIENT.

WHAT the great Somme offensive was to the year 1916, the great Ypres offensive was to the year 1917. You will remember that during the second half of 1916 and the early months of 1917 our fierce and persistent fighting enabled us to thrust so deep a wedge into the enemy's lines that he was forced to retreat from positions which he had fortified with immense labour and wonderful skill. In the defence of these positions he sustained very heavy losses, and day by day saw his reserves dwindling. We were now about to repeat the same tactics on the Ypres salient.

The first step was the winning of the Whitesheet Ridge. I told you the story of this great success in Chapter XXX. of our seventh volume. It was the most perfect piece of work so far accomplished by the British, and it not only straightened out our line and put an end to the old salient, but removed a constant menace to our troops and convoys passing along the roads towards Ypres. Until the Germans were thrust from this uplift of land, which gave them a fine observation post overlooking our trenches to the north, south, and west, we could not hope to make headway in front of Ypres.

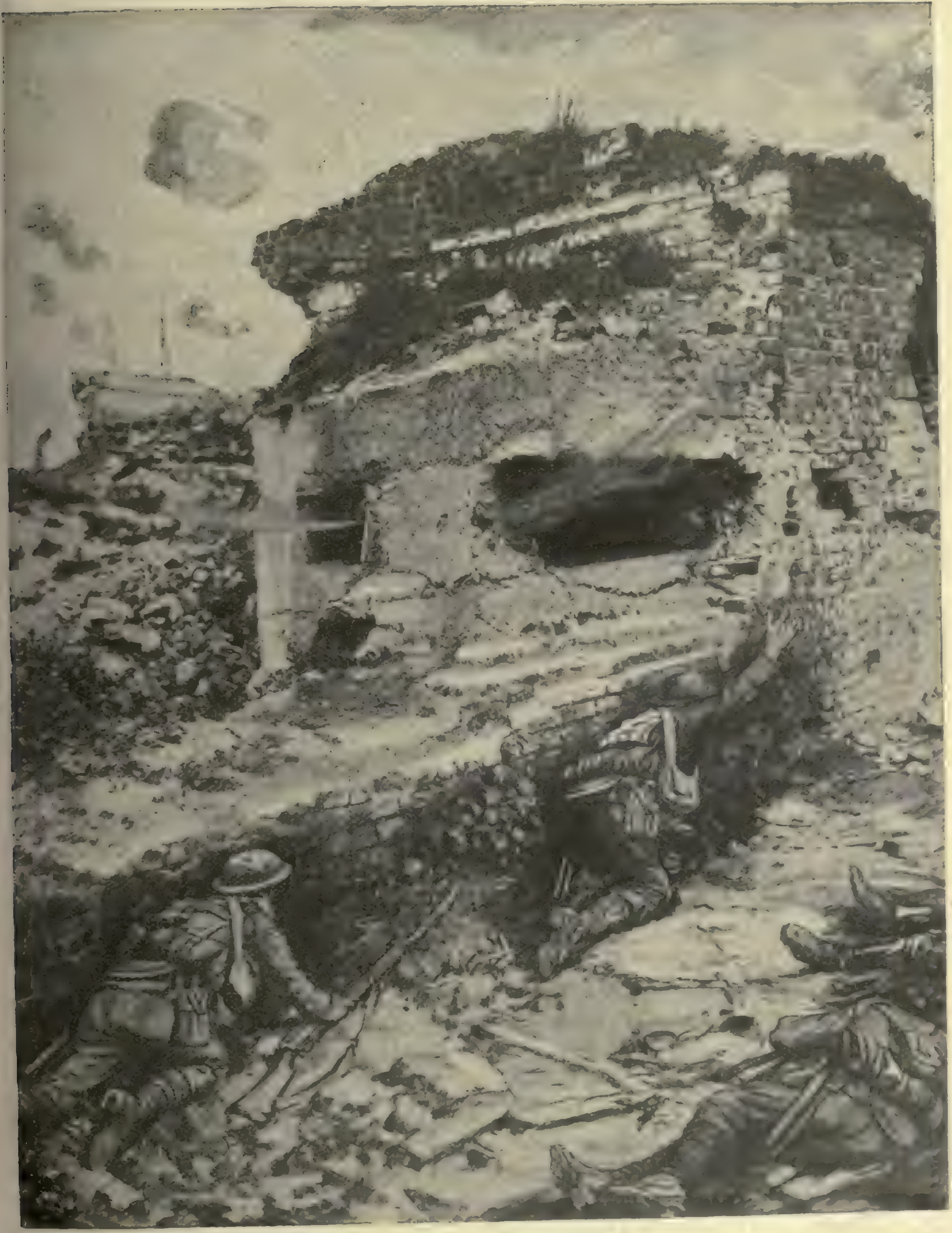
In this chapter I shall describe the first of the series of "pushes" which we made between the Lys and the spreading floods of the Yser. In the course of the story old and well-known places will reappear. You will hear of villages whose names were "familiar in our mouths as household words" as far back as October 1914. Between July 31, 1917, and the close of the year our citizen soldiers were fighting on battlefields which will ever be remembered as the scene of those deadly struggles in which the little British Regular Army held back the German legions, and in so doing literally sacrificed itself.

> "Who shall sing the song of them,
> The wonder and the strength of them,
> The gaiety and tenderness
> They bore across the sea?"

With woefully inferior numbers they met the armies of Germany, then in the first flush of their mighty strength, and the resistance which they made was little short of a miracle. Our admiration for the citizen soldiers who followed in their footsteps must never make us forget the glorious courage and endurance of our regulars in the terrible days of our direst peril. They fought Britain's Thermopylæ, and with a thin line of steel and valour barred the way to the Channel.

Before I describe the first Ypres battle of 1917, let me recall to your minds the character of the country to the east of the old city, and tell you how the famous salient came into being. The whole countryside is very low and flat, with certain slight ridges which, though no more than gentle swellings of the ground, are of very great value as observation posts for artillery. Except for patches of woodland, the largest and most important of which is the Forest of Houthulst to the north-east of Ypres, the whole district, before the war, was carefully tilled. Had we looked down from one of the ridges in September 1914, we should have seen the plain covered with market gardens, laid out in chessboard fashion; we should have noticed many smiling little villages, all connected by good roads, one-half paved after the Flemish manner. Descending to the plain, we should have found that the fields were crossed and recrossed by ditches, and that a few feet below the surface the soil was so waterlogged that it would be likely to become a quagmire after prolonged rain.

The story of how the Ypres salient was formed takes us back to the concluding stages of what is known as the Race to the Sea. You will remember that after the Germans had established themselves on the heights of the Aisne, and frontal attacks had failed to drive them from their formidable positions, General Joffre thrust some of his forces northward in order to outflank the German line on the west. The enemy responded by thrusting his forces northward, and a race began,



A Concrete Gun Emplacement.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

In the Ypres area during 1917 the Germans fortified the shell zone with concrete redoubts, or "pill-boxes" as our men called them. This picture shows our men "stalking" one of these forts, which you will observe has been constructed out of the ruins of a farmhouse.

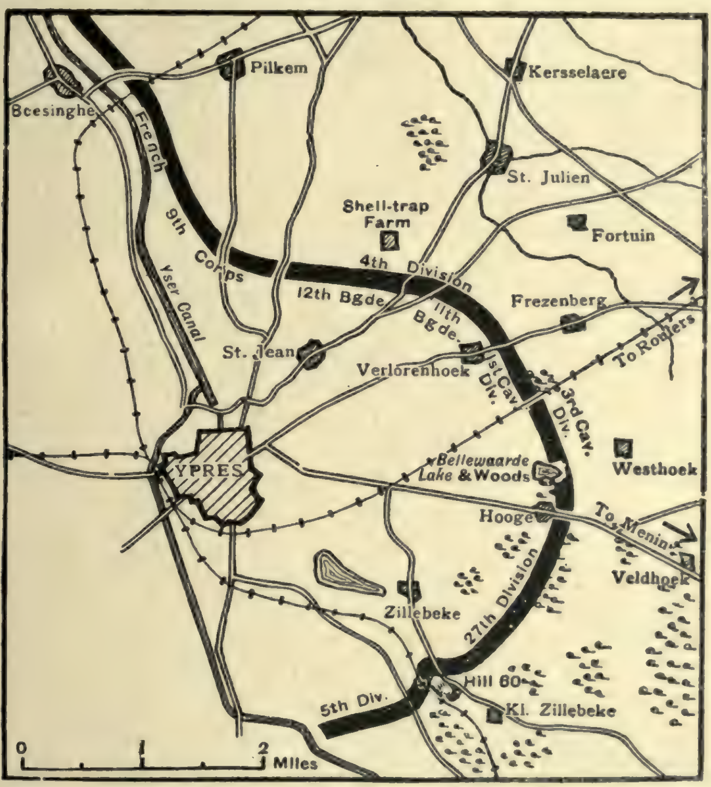
each side endeavouring to get so far ahead that it could outflank the other. By the beginning of October, when my story opens, the Allies were as far north as the flats east of Arras, the scene of the great Somme offensive which began on July 1, 1916. Before the 20th October the Allied line was complete from Albert to the sea, where, of course, the race came to an end.

On 6th October, when Antwerp was in its last throes, a British regular division composed of troops brought from South Africa, Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, and home stations, was landed at Zeebrugge and Ostend. This 7th Division was under the command of General Sir Henry Rawlinson, and it was intended to relieve the beleaguered city. Unhappily it arrived too late, and had only reached Ghent when Antwerp fell. Its task then was to cover the retreat of the Belgian army, which had been instructed to retire westward and defend the line of the Yser. British cavalry cleared the way, and the 7th Division followed the retreating Belgians as a rearguard.

The Germans were hard on their heels, only a day's march behind. While the broken and worn-out Belgians struggled on towards the Yser, the German army made a thrust forward to the north of them and reached the coast. Meanwhile, all unknown to Sir John French, another German army was marching towards Menin in the hope of pushing through Ypres, and, with the help of the northern army, completely cutting off Belgians and Britons alike. When the Belgians were well on their way to the Yser, the 7th Division marched south, and on 13th October reached Roulers. Three days later its advance guard was on a line which ran roughly from Bixschoote to Poelcapelle. At this time the Belgians were in the Forest of Houthulst, which has always been considered a very important military feature of the country. Marlborough said that whoever held the Forest of Houthulst held Flanders. The Belgians were driven out of the forest on 16th October, and were forced back to the Yser line. The invaders, however, were cleared out by French troops, and the line was re-established. Later on it was lost again, and three long and bitter years elapsed before the Allies came within reach of it once more.

On the night that the French cleared the forest, Sir John French, who was still unaware that a German army was marching towards Menin, ordered Sir Henry Rawlinson to advance upon that place. I want you to notice especially the position of Menin. It stands on the Lys, and is an important meeting-place of roads and railways. Whoever commands Menin is in a position to threaten the great city of Lille. One of the main objects of our Ypres battles of 1917 was to reach and hold the town of Menin.

Sir Henry Rawlinson began his advance, but soon discovered that large enemy forces were facing him. He could not possibly carry out his orders, though he came within about three miles of his goal. Such vast enemy forces now assailed him that he was obliged to entrench himself on a line of eight miles, just east of the Gheluvelt cross-roads. Meanwhile Sir Douglas Haig's First Army moved north to Ypres in the hope of reaching Thourout, but in front of the old city he was held up by the Germans. He linked up on the left with the French and


Pilkem
Kersselaere
Boesinghe
French
9th Corps
Yser Canal
Shell-trap Farm
St. Julien
Fortuin
4th Division
12th Bgde
11th Bgde.
Frezenberg
To Roulers
St. Jean
Verlorenhoek
1st Cav. Div.
3rd Cav. Div.
Westhoek
Bellewaarde Lake & Woods
YPRES
Hooge
To Menin
Veldhoek
Zillebeke
27th Division
Hill 60
Kl. Zillebeke
5th Div.
0
1
2
Miles

The Ypres Salient after the Second Battle of Ypres.

Belgians, and on the right with the 7th Division, which, in turn, linked up with the Third Army, holding the line southward to the Lys. Thus the Ypres salient, the scene of some of the most terrific struggles known to history, came into being.

I need not continue the story in detail. Every reader of these pages remembers the First Battle of Ypres, that tremendous battle which began on 21st October and did not end until the defeat of the Prussian Guards on 11th November. During that bitter and long-drawn-out struggle the fate of Britain trembled in the balance. The critical day was 31st October, when the British line was broken near Gheluvelt and all seemed lost. Thanks to a superb advance by the Worcesters, Gheluvelt was retaken and the line re-formed. Never were the Germans so near to decisive victory. The Allies lost 100,000 men during those desperate days, but despite all the efforts of the enemy the British line held fast.

When the Second Battle of Ypres began, on April 22, 1915, the Ypres salient curved round from Steenstrate on the north, through Langemarck and Broodseinde, which is some five miles east of Ypres, thence southward in front of Polygon Wood and south-west to Hill 60. Gheluvelt at that time was half a mile or so in front of our lines. It was in this battle that the Germans for ever disgraced themselves by using poison gas. I am sure you have not forgotten how the French colonial troops, subjected to this awful ordeal, gave way, and wild with terror fled towards Ypres, leaving a gap of four undefended miles, through which the Germans poured. Nor have you forgotten the wonderful stand made by the Canadians, who, though overwhelmed by superior numbers of men and guns, and sick to death with the poisoned fumes, refused to give way, and by their magnificent courage and endurance averted disaster.

By 26th April the northern face of the salient had been beaten back, leaving Pilkem, Langemarck, and St. Julien in the enemy's hands. The eastern and southern faces, however, held fast. In May we were forced to shorten our line, and in doing so we gave up Broodseinde, Zonnebeke, the Polygon Wood, and Westhoek.* There were many who thought that the salient should be abandoned altogether. It was no advantage to us ; on the contrary, it was a death trap, for the Germans had the higher ground, and could sweep all parts of the district with shell-fire. Despite all arguments we still held on to it.

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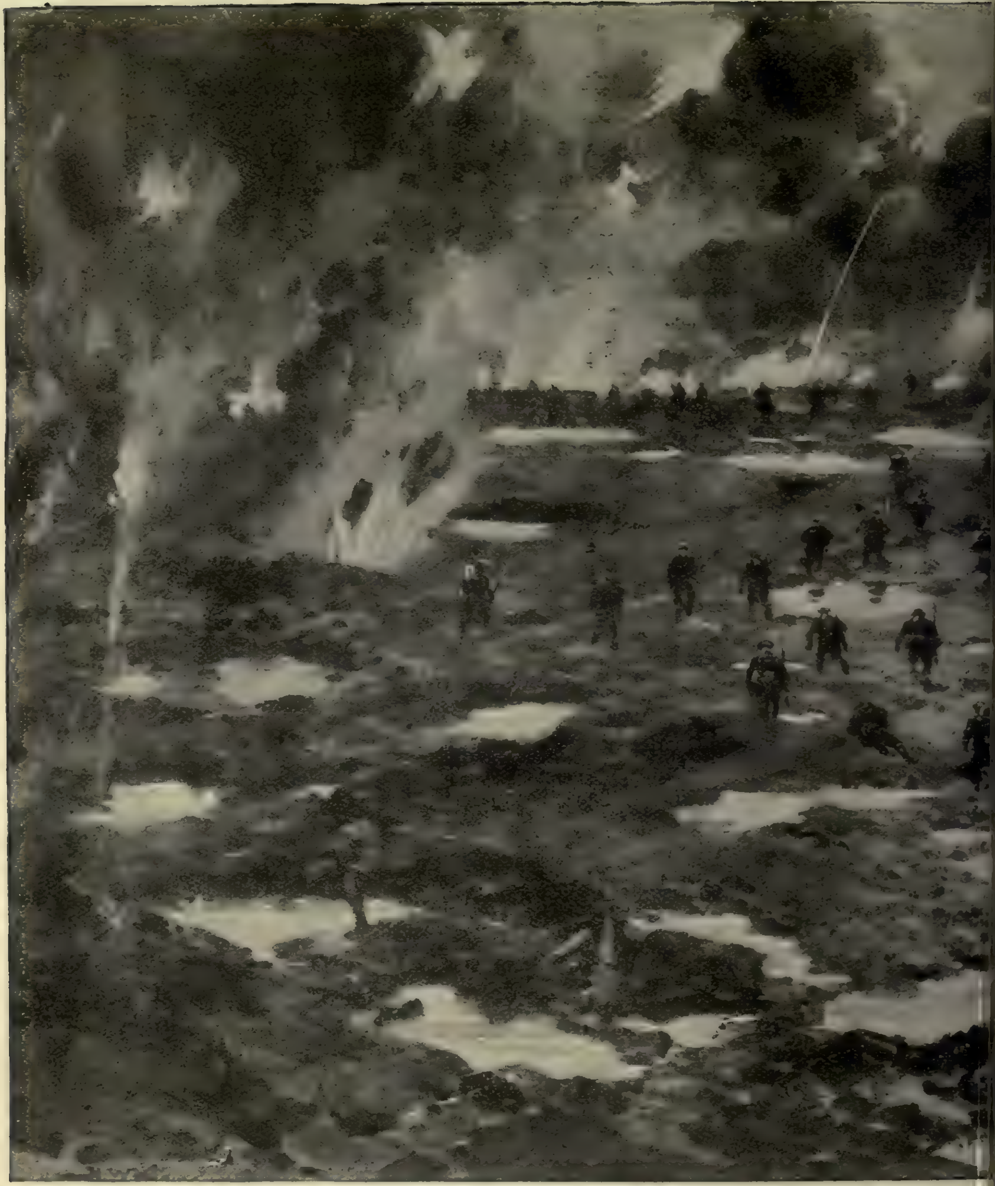
* See map, p. 21.

Though the Germans had suffered two great repulses, they still hoped to be able to force us back upon Ypres. Fighting continued throughout the year with varying success. Meanwhile the British army was growing greatly in numbers, and before midsummer 1916 was over five millions in strength. The day was fast approaching when the offensive in the West would pass to the Allies and the enemy would be permanently thrown on the defensive. He knew well that before long a mighty assault would be made on him, so he strove to take time by the forelock and make his effort before we were ready. On 8th February he opened a heavy bombardment of our wet and feeble trenches, and continued to hurl shells upon our positions for several days. Early on the morning of the 12th his infantry struck hard at the extreme left of the line, near the point of junction with the French. German bombers captured a section of our trenches, but an attempt later in the day to follow up this success was foiled. Next day the enemy's guns flattened out our trenches at Hooge, and during the following afternoon a series of mines were exploded. Then the German infantry advanced against our positions, but never reached them; they were mown down by rifle and machine-gun fire.

Further south, in that part of the horseshoe of shallow upland which separates the basin of the Lys from that of the Yser, stands a hillock from thirty to forty feet high, covered with trees, and known to our men as The Bluff. A fierce bombardment wrecked our defences on this hillock, and in the following rush they were captured. We tried to recover them, but our attempt miscarried owing to the sodden ground and the pelting rain. Not until 2nd March, after the Germans had been in possession for seventeen days, were they driven out. All the lost ground was re-won. At the end of the month we attacked to the south of St. Eloi, where, you will remember, the Germans had a small salient. We began by touching off six huge mines, and before the echoes of the great explosions had ceased our men were in the German lines. Thereafter, until the end of the month, there was much confused fighting in which we generally had the advantage.

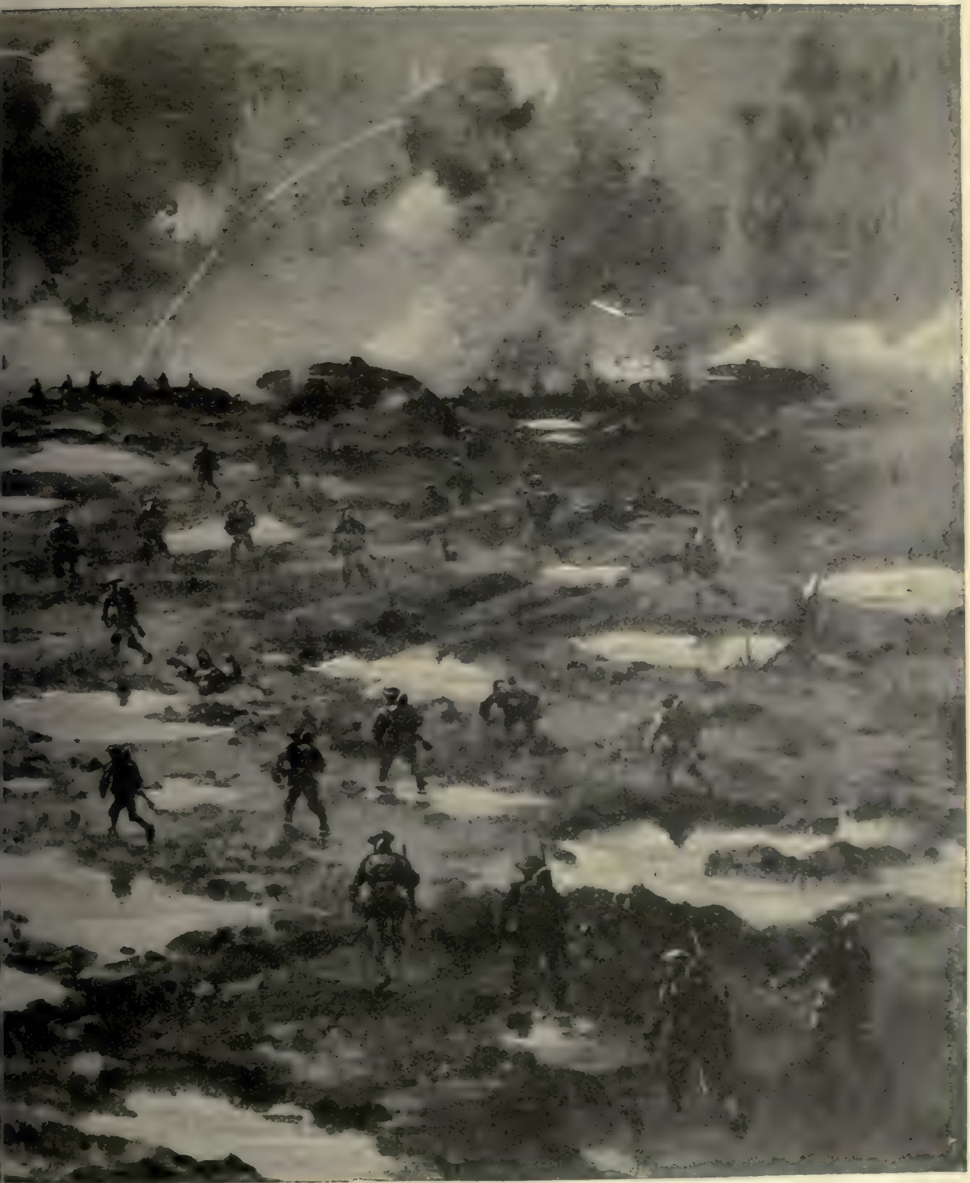
In June the Germans made another and a final effort to break through, and once more the Canadians held them off.



British Infantry advancing across the water-logged plains

(*From the picture by H. W. Koekkoek. B*

"Floods of rain," says a correspondent, "cloaked the whole of the Flanders plain. The shell-holes,
quagmire." Our illustration shows the advance which was made between dawn and sunrise of a cloudy,
side between heavy downpours. Star rockets and Véry lights were used in the uncertain half-light. T



luring the attack on the German Positions, July 31, 1917.

ermission of the Illustrated London News.)

lready half filled with soakage, were flooded to the brim, and the whole battlefield was a horrible
hreatening morning, with light scuds of misty rain and drizzle drifting at intervals across the country.
he right of the picture two tanks are seen hotly engaged.

The sector on which the enemy attacked was that portion of the salient between Hooge and the Ypres-Comines railway. Just south of Hooge was that wilderness of broken tree stumps known as Sanctuary Wood ; beyond the wood were those flat watery fields across which the Household Cavalry made their famous dismounted charge during the First Battle of Ypres, and to the south-east rose the mound known as Hill 60. Against this front of about two miles the Germans directed the fire of their big guns, which hurled shot and shell upon our trenches from three sides. When our parapets were knocked to pieces, they laid a barrage behind and sent forward ten battalions. Never in any previous bombardment had the fire been so intense, and the enemy supposed that all his troops had to do was to push forward and take possession of undefended ground.

As the Germans advanced to what they supposed would be easy victory, our dazed and broken men rose out of the ruins and the shell-holes, and with the butts of their rifles, bits of entrenching tools, and that old British weapon their fists, fell upon the amazed enemy with the utmost fury. Princess Patricia's Light Infantry and the Canadian Mounted Rifles fought with all their old gallantry, but before the day was over the enemy had broken through our centre towards Zillebeke to a depth of 700 yards.

At seven the next morning the Canadians counter-attacked and won much of the lost ground. They could not, however, hold it, so fierce was the fire of the enemy. They were obliged to fall back again, and two days later the enemy captured Hooge. The Canadians, however, were not to be denied, and after a week of bombardment, in the midst of blinding torrents of rain, they went forward once more. They found that our guns had wrought awful havoc on the Germans. With little difficulty they regained their old front trenches, and thus ended the final attempt of the Germans to drive us from the salient. We still held it on July 7, 1917, when we captured Whitesheet Ridge, and thus prepared the way for the series of battles which I am about to describe.

I have now given you a brief outline of the history of that stretch of marshy land which has been literally watered with the blood of our bravest and best. What the bare, rolling uplands of Verdun are to the French, the meadows of Ypres are to the British—a battlefield of deathless renown, the scene of countless heroisms, the graveyard of thousands who fought to the last gasp in defence of all that they held dear. We are now to hear the story of how we began to win back the old blood-sodden ground. Our successes between the Ancre and the Somme had forced the enemy to retire. It was hoped that we might be able, in the same persistent, methodical way, to drive out the Ypres salient until it was pushed so far into the enemy's front that he would be compelled to retire as he had done further south. Should we penetrate sufficiently far, the enemy would be compelled to give up the Belgian coast and begin a retirement which would take him far on his return journey to the Fatherland.

On the morning of July 31, 1917, the ridge which rises for some thirty or forty feet above the plain, and carries the villages of Pilkem, Frezenberg, and Westhoek,* was in the hands of the Germans, who had strongly fortified it with three lines of defences linked together by a multitude of communicating trenches, the whole forming a lacework of trenches and earthworks. Behind this ridge was another ridge extending from the north of Passchendaele close to the Ypres-Roulers railway to Gheluvelt on the Ypres-Menin road. This ridge, which was the main German defensive position, was even more strongly fortified, especially along the three-mile level between Zonnebeke and Gheluvelt. If you look carefully at the map, you will see to the south of the Ypres-Menin road the village of Zandvoorde. This village and a neighbouring hamlet stand on slightly elevated plateaus, and on them the Germans had posted their big guns for more than two years. You will notice that they were thus able to command the Ypres-Menin road from the south.

Perhaps you wonder why the Germans should have taken steps to oppose thus strongly any advance along the Ypres-Menin road. I have already told you that Menin is an important meeting-place of roads and railways, and that it stands on the Lys and is the key to Lille. The Germans knew that we should make a bold bid for Menin, and they had prepared to meet it by strongly fortifying the elevated villages and massing guns in them.

Every detail of the German defensive system was known to

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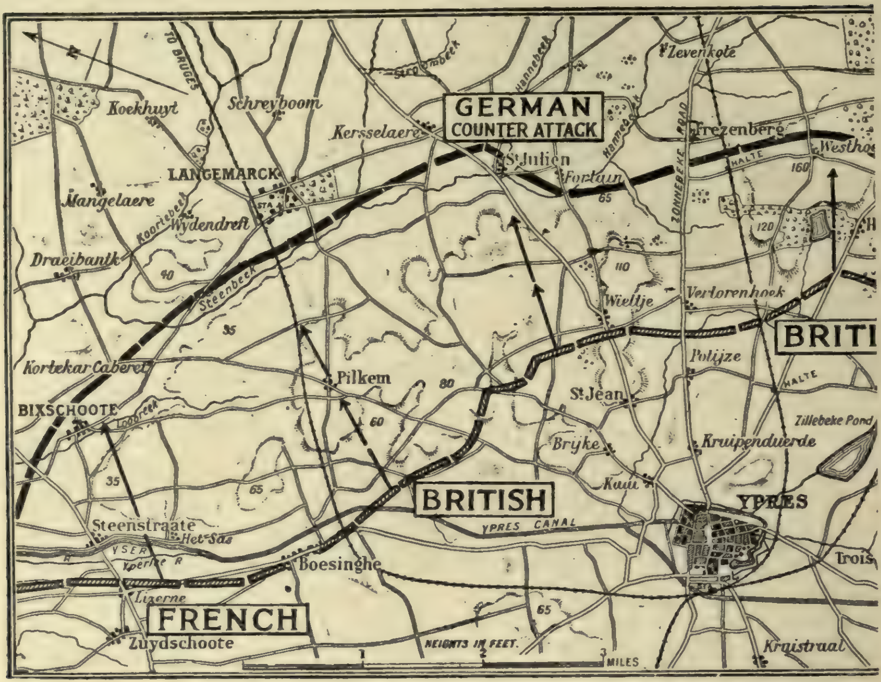
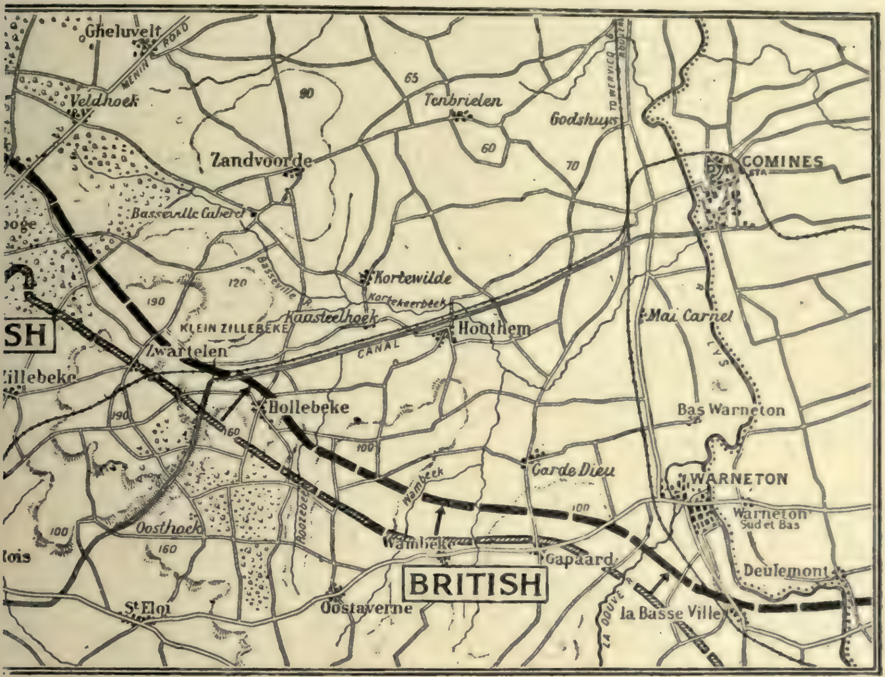
* See map, pp. 28–29.


TO BRUGES
Schreyboom
Stroombeek
Hannebeek
Zevenkote
Koekhuyt
Kersselaere
GERMAN
COUNTER ATTACK
Hannebeek
Frezenberg
Westho
LANGEMARCK
STA
St Julien
Fortuin
65
HALTE
160
Mangelaere
Koortebeek
Wydendreft
ZONNEBEKE ROAD
120
Draeibank
90
Steenbeek
110
Wieltje
Verlorenhoek
35
BRITI
Kortekar Cabaret
Polijze
Pilkem
80
HALTE
St Jean
BIXSCHOOTE
Loobeek
60
Zillebeke Pond
Bryke
Kruipenduerde
35
65
BRITISH
Kaai
YPRES
Steenstraate
Het Sas
YPRES CANAL
YSER
Yperlee R
Boesinghe
Trois
Lizerne
65
FRENCH
Zuydschoote
HEIGHTS IN FEET
1
2
3
MILES
Kruistraat

The Fifteen-mile Stretch of Country over which the British and

our General Staff, for our airmen had supplied them with numerous photographs, which had been diligently studied. Every commander knew exactly the character of the positions which he was to attack and the nature of the ground over which he would have to advance. There was no intention of trying to break through ; certain positions were marked down for capture, and when these were secured the day's work was to be considered at an end.

While British regiments held the front from Pilkem to the river Lys, a distance of over fifteen miles, French troops had been brought up and stationed on our left flank from Pilkem to the flooded country north of Dixmude. Facing the French centre, and about four miles distant, stood the Forest of Houthulst, which the Germans had converted into one vast fortress, filled with guns. It was also used to shelter their reserves ; within its recesses, secure from aerial observation, they could be massed and sent out, right or left, to any part of the line which might be threatened. French and British were to go


Gheluvelt
MENIN ROAD
Veldhoek
Zandvoorde
Tenbrielen
Godshuys
COMINES
Basseville Cabaret
Kortewilde
Kasteelhoek
Houthem
CANAL
KLEIN ZILLEBEKE
Zwartelen
SH
Zillebeke
Hollebeke
Mai Carnel
LYS
Bas Warneton
Garde Dieu
WARNETON
Warneton Sud et Bas
Oosthoek
Wambeke
Gapaard
BRITISH
Deulemont
St Eloi
Oostaverne
la Basse Ville
LA DOUVE
90
65
60
70
120
190
160
100

French advanced on the morning of Tuesday, July 31, 1917.

forward shoulder to shoulder, as they had done with such success on the Somme.

Long before the battle our aviators won the control of the air, just as they had done on the Somme and during the battle of Messines Ridge. Then came four days of continuous wet weather, and for nearly a week afterwards thick white mists shrouded the plain and made observation almost impossible. Meanwhile the Staff was working busily to complete the general arrangements. You must not forget that weeks of preparation are necessary before a modern army can advance. Guns, great and small, must be brought up in thousands ; roads must be prepared, and bridges made across the waterways. It is said that just before the battle a single division of engineers built seventeen bridges in an afternoon. Ammunition must be heaped up in immense quantities, and all kinds of stores must be in readiness. Last of all, the troops which are to go forward must be mustered and stationed in trenches, ready for the fateful moment when they must " go over the top " at the word of command. A correspondent tells us that our preparations were on a most elaborate scale. While our troops were massing on the open plain, scores of clever plans for concealment were put into practice. Massive concrete gun pits were made in fields of corn, and clearing stations were set up amongst growing crops. Many new roads were made, and miles of railway lines were laid down ; goods yards appeared where only cow sheds had stood for generations, and millions of shells were safely stored under the very eyes of the enemy. Those hideous weapons of gas and oil and flame which the Germans had introduced into warfare were now our weapons too, and the apparatus necessary was stationed wherever it was likely to be effective. For weeks, the correspondent tells us, he saw the highroads crowded with infantry and wagons, and gigantic howitzers, while barges filled with khaki-clad figures moved along the canals behind panting little tugs, the men dangling their feet over the side and greeting every native they passed with a joke and a smile. He also saw famous divisions slipping into well-screened billets ; veterans stiffened by two years' hard fighting marching again to meet the Hun ; Somme warriors now learning Flemish and gazing in wonder at the strange chessboard land of ditches and windmills.

The King saw these stirring scenes during the three days which he spent with his armies of the North. He watched them rehearsing for the battle, going forward at a slow, easy pace over a mimic No Man's Land, their rifles at the trail. Then he watched them fix bayonets, and heard them break into a cheer as they dashed forward and carried the trench. He also saw the Guards storm an earthwork exactly modelled on one which they would have to tackle in grim earnest before long, and he carried away with him a picture of his brave soldiers treading the road to victory along roads bordered by green fields with here and there a red-roofed cottage.

For ten days our guns and those of the French never ceased to pound the German positions and batteries. So effective was their fire that the crew of one German battery had to be replaced nine times, and the guns of another battery five times. On the night before the battle gas shells were rained on the enemy. Then came a pause, and suddenly all along the front myriads of red and white lights shot up into the air. They gave the signal for the massed batteries of the Allies to commence that whirlwind fire which precedes an advance. Trench mortars joined in and poured out flights of canisters filled with oil, which burst into flame as they struck the ground and made the dark cloudy morning as bright as Piccadilly Circus on nights before the war.

Why, you ask, were these flaming oil canisters hurled into the enemy's territory? The enemy had adopted a new system of defence. All over the shell zone he had set up thick redoubts of concrete which our men called "pill boxes." The flaming oil canisters revealed these "pill boxes," each of which contained one or more machine guns, and our artillery was thus able to shatter many of them. Most of the trenches were earthworks built up from the ground and strengthened by wood from the Belgian forests, though some were of the pattern usual on the Somme.

From what you know of the country east of Ypres you can easily understand that while the enemy held the shallow ridge an attack was very difficult. Every man and every gun that went forward had to cross a broad river-canal. The enemy had "registered" every bridge, and now shells rained down upon them. When the bridges were crossed, worse difficulties would have to be encountered. The rain had flooded much of the country, and every shell-hole was a lake. The whole battlefield resembled an archipelago of small islands in a spreading sea.

The great majority of the troops which were to make the advance were English, though Scots, Welsh, Australians, and New Zealanders were also engaged. At four in the morning of 31st July our men sprang over the parapets, and before the end of the day Sir Douglas Haig was able to telegraph home the cheering news that the enemy's positions had been entered and our line had been advanced all the way from La Basse Ville on the River Lys to Steenstraate on the Yser. The French on our left flank had captured Steenstraate, and having gained their objectives early in the day, had gone ahead with such gallantry that they had captured Bixschoote and pushed along the Langemarck road as far as the Kortekar Inn.

Meanwhile, in the left centre, our men had broken through all three of the German lines, and had secured the crossings of the Hannebeck or Steenbeck brook. They had done all that they had set out to do, and on their way eastward had captured

Frezenberg, St. Julien, and Pilkem, as well as numerous fortified farms. On the right centre, south of the Ypres-Roulers railway, there had been very heavy fighting during the day; but the enemy's lines had been penetrated to a depth of half a mile, and Westhoek had been stormed. On the right, south of the Ypres-Menin road, excellent progress had been made. Hooge, Sanctuary Wood, Hollebeke, and La Basse Ville had all fallen, and we had advanced along the Zillebeke-Zandvoorde road to a point east of Klein Zillebeke. Some five thousand prisoners had been taken, including ninety-five officers. We did not, however, seize many guns, for the enemy had removed them to the rear while the artillery preparation was going on.

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Following their usual custom, the Germans counter-attacked all along the line during the night; but they failed to win any success, except at St. Julien and Westhoek, where strong enemy forces drove our men out of the former village and into the western outskirts of the latter. These gains, however, were very short-lived. St. Julien was recaptured on 3rd August during a brilliant counter-attack, and Westhoek was recovered on the 10th, after a whole week of rain had suspended our forward movement. On the same day the Bedfords and West Surreys fought their way into Glencorse Wood, the straggling piece of woodland which lies between Westhoek and the Ypres-Menin road. Some five or seven counter-attacks were made upon them; but though they were forced back to the western ridge of the wood, they still maintained themselves amidst the shattered tree stumps. In the course of the fighting we captured 500 German prisoners and six guns. Our first attempt to push out the Ypres salient had succeeded. The weather, however, had fought for the Germans, and had robbed us of those advantages which we should certainly have obtained had the elements permitted us to continue our advance.

CHAPTER III.

SOLDIERS' STORIES OF THE BATTLE.

FIRST, let me tell you how the Welshmen captured Pilkem and completely shattered a famous Guard Fusilier Regiment which was the special pride of the Kaiser. To the Germans these crack troops are known as the "Cockchafers" or "May Beetles." It was the Kaiser's custom to send them every year on 1st May his compliments and a small packet containing a live cockchafer. On the ridge at Pilkem all three battalions of the Cockchafers were in line—the first in the front system, the second in the second system, and the third in support behind. They had only been two days on the Ypres front, and were, therefore, fresh and in good fettle; but, as you will soon learn, the Welsh made short work of them.

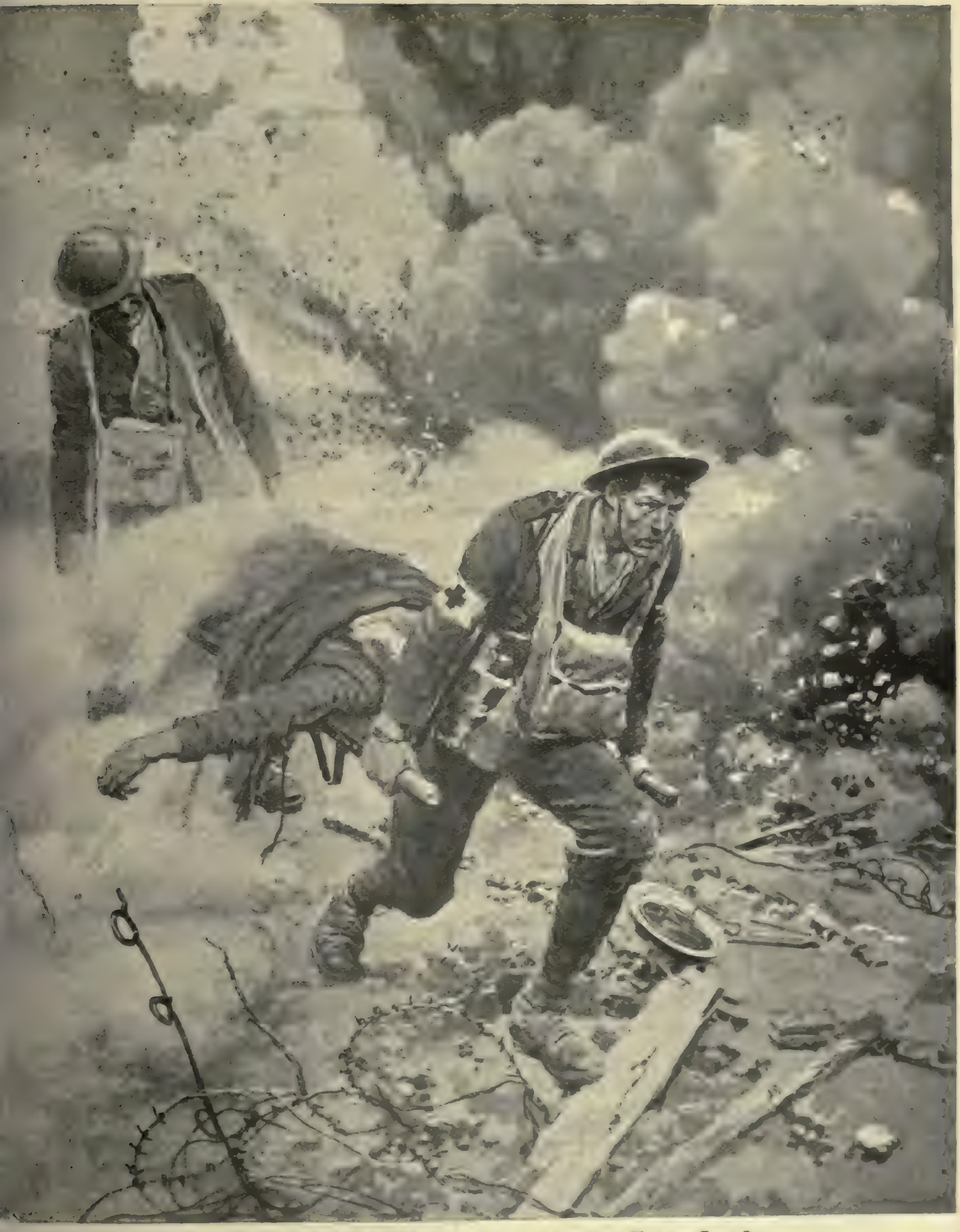
They advanced, just before dawn, into the wilderness of little forts and loopholed farms behind a very effective barrage and keeping a perfect line. The barrage was so intense that it threw the Guards into hopeless confusion. Before the Welsh could reach the top of the ridge the staff officers of the Cockchafers had decamped to the rear, and their men were holding up their hands and surrendering in batches. The Welshmen secured their first prisoners just behind the actual front line, where they carried a strongly fortified position known as "Mackensen Farm." Shortly afterwards they added to their bag more prisoners and a great store of ammunition. Some of the garrisons in the "pill-boxes" and other strong points fought hard, but the Welshmen were more than a match for them. They stalked and bombed or rushed each little fortress as they reached it, and while they were so engaged many fine deeds of individual gallantry were done.

Near the village of Pilkem, which was of course a heap of ruins, the Welshmen found a magnificent system of trenches—some ten feet across and twelve feet deep, and full of concrete structures and dug-outs of the most elaborate kind. They also discovered an underground dressing-station which accommodated a hundred patients. Amongst the wounded were a number of Cockchafers who showed no signs of damage, but knew that they would be safer under the Red Cross than anywhere else. In all, some five hundred prisoners were taken, and at least as many must have been killed or wounded. One of the officers who was captured broke down and cried like a child when he saw hundreds of his comrades in the prisoners' cage.

In some of the dug-outs the Welshmen found leaflets on which was printed a poem in praise of the Cockchafers. This poem had been sold at a penny throughout Germany, and had been distributed by the men to their admirers. A Welsh sergeant who knew German greatly delighted his comrades by translating the poem to them. It described in detail the "glorious" history of the Guards Fusiliers and their heroic exploits in the war. It told how, in 1870, they flew to France and desolated it; and how in this war, when called to fly over the Rhine, they took wing and Belgium ceased to exist. Then Hindenburg called to them, and they flew east and broke the Russians. Then Austria called, and south they went, and flew over the Carpathians. It also related how the British gnashed their teeth when the "Cockchafers" swarmed out against them. Many of the discomfited Cockchafers had the grace to look very sheepish when they saw our men grinning over the poem. One of them suggested that another verse should be added.

* * * * * * *

Now let me briefly describe the fine work done by the Lancashire Fusiliers and the Loyal North Lancashires. These gallant men, amongst whom were many from Liverpool and the neighbourhood, had to go forward from Wieltje through several systems of trenches and over ground thickly studded with "pill-boxes," most of which had been erected on the ruins of small farmsteads long since blown to bits by our guns. Each one of these concreted redoubts had to be taken by a separate action, and the battle resolved itself into a costly series of small engagements. Young subalterns, each in charge of a platoon,



Stretcher-bearers bringing in the Wounded under Heavy Gun-fire.

(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

undertook the work of reducing the pill-boxes. A correspondent tells us that they handled their troops not only gallantly but skilfully, and that the men followed their lead with cunning as well as with pluck. They first ringed round the redoubts with rifle-fire, then gradually closed in and hurled bombs at the structures. Finally, they rushed in and fought with the garrisons at close quarters. In this way they captured several of the concrete forts, in spite of the continuous machine-gun fire which belched from them. In one of the fortified farms which fell to their gallantry and resource they captured 160 prisoners. The severest task set them was the capture of Pommern Castle and Redoubt, twin strongholds crammed with machine guns. With the help of a Tank this formidable work was taken.

In front of the Lancashires were five batteries of German field guns, which fired upon them as they advanced through the awful mud. At 500 yards our men lying prone in the squelching bog picked off the gunners one by one. Then they advanced past the derelict guns, just as they had been told to do when rehearsing the attack, and sent back a message reporting their capture. On they went, their numbers rapidly dwindling, and gained the high ground in front of a farm. Here the remnant under the command of a sole surviving officer made a stand. Two days later a delayed report was received at headquarters to the effect that they were holding out, but that the battalion had been badly cut up.

Unhappily when the report was received the ground thus captured was no longer in our hands. The troops on the left of the Lancashires had been held up by uncut wire, and the enemy, seizing the opportunity, began an attack upon their exposed flank. A heavy artillery fire was concentrated upon them, low-flying aeroplanes directing the gunners. At the same time a body of Germans tried to cut in on their right. Thus assailed, the Lancashires decided to fall back to a better defensive line, and to cover this movement 160 of them took cover in the ruins of a farm, where they plied their machine-guns and rifles until only thirty of them were left standing amidst heaps of dead and dying. By this time, however, they had done their work; what remained of the battalion had safely reached the new line. Then the thirty survivors decided to fight their way back to their comrades. The enemy closed in upon them, and only ten of the gallant fellows reached the new line. One hundred and fifty had fallen, but not until they had secured the safety of their fellows and had strewn the ground around their position with German dead. Our airmen reported that they had never before seen so many dead Germans as on that section of the battlefield.

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In Chapter II. I told you that bad weather and thick mist interfered gravely with the work of our air observation before and during the battle. Nevertheless, our aviators were on the wing and did splendid work. The low clouds compelled them to fly at below five hundred feet, and in some cases within two hundred feet, of the ground. A correspondent tells us that they looked like swallows on a wet day. Despite the continual fusillade directed against them, they managed to keep contact with our advancing infantry and work great havoc on the enemy with their machine guns. One flying-man who went above the clouds to meet an enemy fought him high and low, and was within fifty feet of the ground when the German machine side-slipped and crashed to earth. Another visited an aerodrome, and flying below the level of the roofs fired into the sheds. Then sweeping forward, he silenced a machine gun which was attacking him.

Another airman, who went out shortly before five in the morning, opened his day by patrolling roads and canals and firing on and scattering any troops he saw. He then visited an aerodrome, where the occupants were asleep, and wakened them up with a bomb. The place at once began to buzz like a hive of angry bees; nevertheless he flew round and round it at a height of thirty feet, dropping bombs from time to time and firing into the enemy through the open doors. Occasionally he drew off to change the drums of his machine gun or to fix his bomb lever afresh, but came back time after time to his work of destruction. On one occasion he actually bumped the ground while firing into the sheds.

This escapade over, he sailed off and spied some officers on horseback. When he had driven them at the gallop into cover, he fell in with a body of 200 men whom he scattered. Two hostile aeroplanes now attacked him. He shot down the one, and the other flew off. When he descended to have a look at the machine which he had shot down, he discovered a crowd gathered round it, and promptly peppered the assembly with his machine gun. Then he returned to the aerodrome which he had visited earlier in the day, dropped a few more bombs on it, and careered off, looking for fresh adventures. Sighting a passenger train, he swooped down upon it and fired at it until he ran out of ammunition. Finally he jogged off towards home, having spent a very merry and adventurous morning.

Even more remarkable were the experiences of an eighteen-year-old pilot who had never before flown alone in the war zone. On the night before the battle he was very glum because he had been told that his youth and inexperience would prevent him from flying next day. He pleaded hard, but was refused, and went miserable to bed, where he lay awake nursing his grievance. Suddenly he jumped out, and in his pyjamas sought his squadron commander and said, " Look here, sir, can't I go ? " The lad was in such deadly earnest that the commander gave way.

Next morning he was one of the first to ascend, and before long his adventures began. He sighted a motor car containing German officers, and promptly chased it. From a height of fifty feet he gave them a drum of cartridges ; whereupon one of them returned the fire with his revolver. With that chivalry which is characteristic of airmen, the pilot drew his own revolver and fought the German on equal terms. The car stopped suddenly at a house by the roadside, and the occupants dashed under cover. Our airman promptly fired a few rounds into the house, dropped a Véry light on the car in the hope of setting it on fire, and then flew up into the clouds for a rest.

Shortly afterwards he descended again, and caught sight of a party of infantry crossing a bridge. A bomb scattered them, and as he flew away he counted five dead bodies lying on the bridge. He spent the rest of his time firing into trenches and running the gantlet of rifles, machine guns, and " Archies." Finally he reached home safely, greatly delighted with the result of his first morning's fighting.

Many other exploits almost as thrilling were reported. German prisoners frankly expressed their amazement at the daring of our flying men, and described the confusion which they caused among the troops upon which they suddenly swooped. They said that great damage had been done to their air depots, and that many ammunition dumps had been destroyed. While the cavalrymen of the air were thus engaged, other flying men were busy following up the advancing troops and sending back valuable reports. Some of the machines came back literally riddled with bullets, though the occupants were unhurt.

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I told you earlier in this chapter of the splendid gallantry of the Welsh and the Lancashires. You know enough of our men to be quite sure that all the other units engaged fought like Britons. The Guards, for example, went about their work with wonderful discipline. They went forward methodically, and took every trench and strong point in their way, until they reached the appointed limit of their advance on the Steenbeck brook, which they crossed at half a dozen points and on which they established bridgeheads. During the battle we found a German document which gave a list of British troops graded in order of "frightfulness." In this document the Highlanders were given the first place. Those of them who were engaged in the battle lived up to the reputation which they had acquired amongst the enemy. But though the Highlanders, as usual, covered themselves with glory, and the Australians and New Zealanders won fresh laurels, "none did better, because none could have done better, than the Englishmen."

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A story is told of a Middlesex bomber whose unit was held up by "pill-boxes" along the railway which runs by the side of the Ypres-Comines Canal. A specially strong post containing machine guns gave much trouble, but our bomber came to the rescue. He somehow crept round by the railway embankment, and single-handed bombed the little stronghold and killed the occupants. Then our men romped forward, and discovered a line of concrete dug-outs full of Germans. Bombs dropped through the ventilating holes soon produced a fine batch of prisoners. In one of the dug-outs a German officer was found hiding in bed. One of our men saw him, and shouted, "Here, we want you." As the officer was reluctant to move from his snug concealment, he was seized by the hair of the head and brought triumphantly into our lines.

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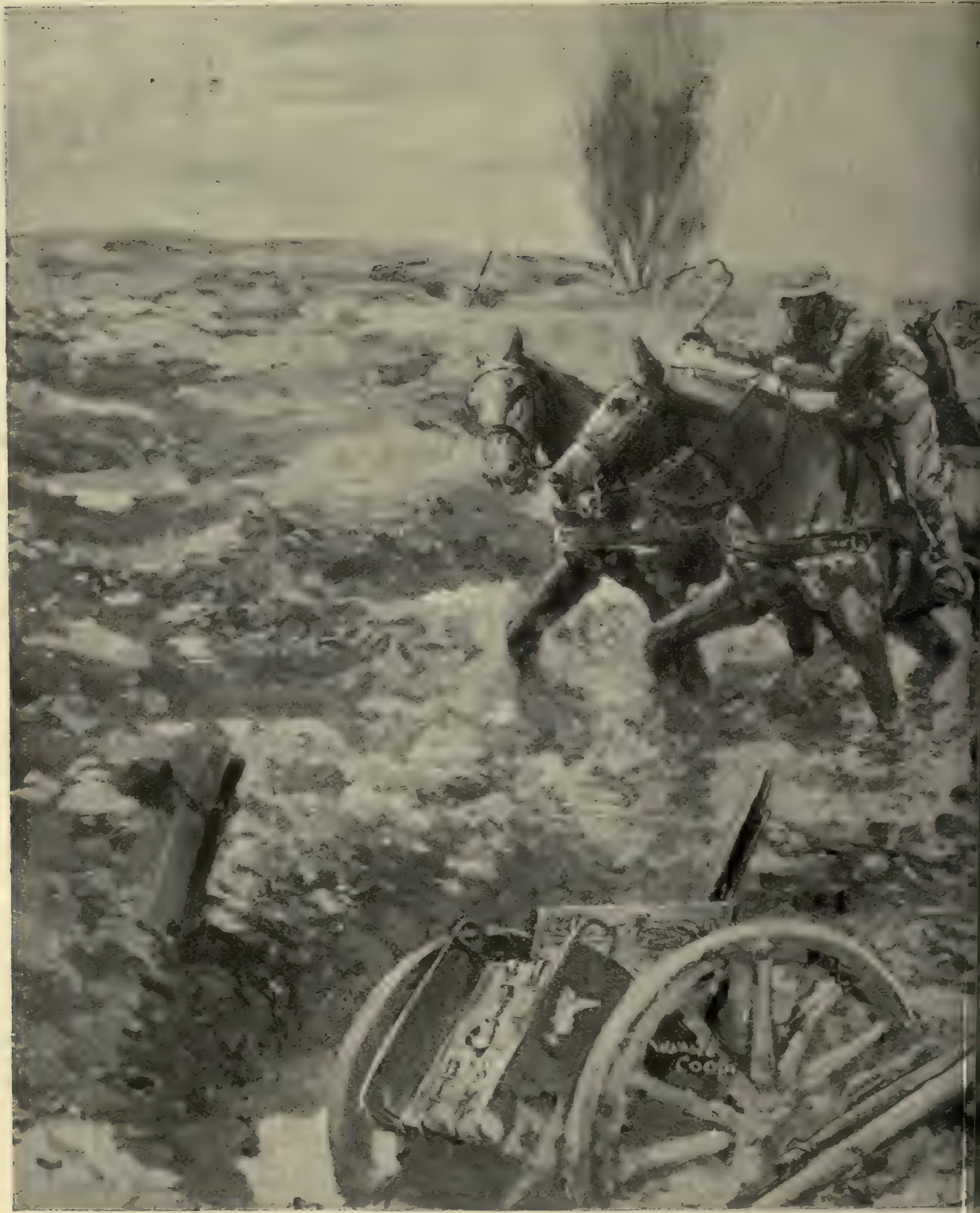
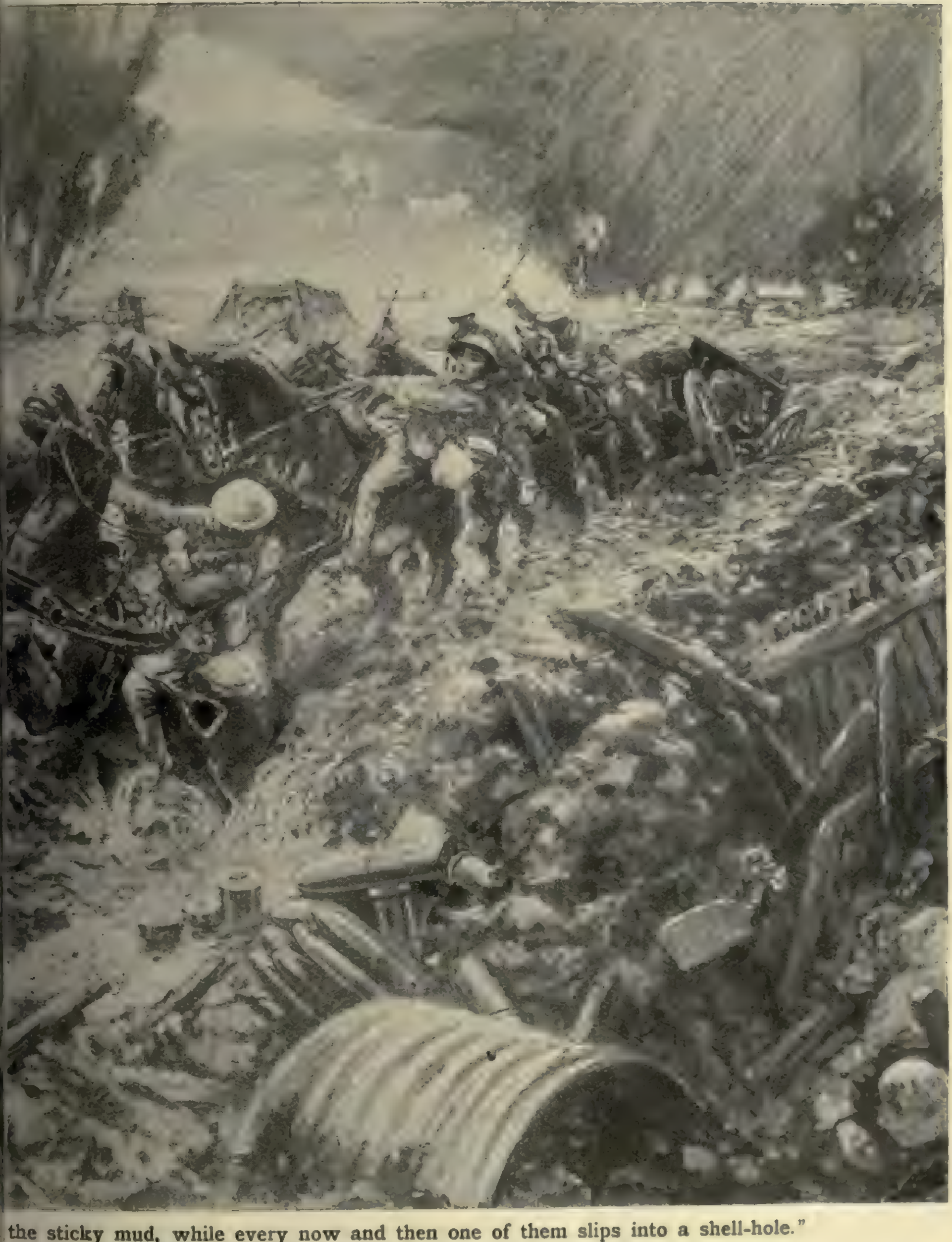
During the advance along the Menin road there was very heavy fighting in Sanctuary Wood, where many gallant deeds


Wallace Coop

A British Battery crossing rain-sodden ground near Ypres. "The horses sink dee

(*From the picture by Wallace Coop.* B



the sticky mud, while every now and then one of them slips into a shell-hole."

mission of The Illustrated London News.)

were done by men who had lost their officers, and by officers who had lost their men, but had collected groups of stragglers in order to continue the attack. Let me give you a few examples. A young private was seen to advance with a Lewis gun, and by rapid fire put a German machine gun out of action. In another part of the wood a lance-corporal organized groups of stragglers, and at their head rushed several German strong points. A wounded captain, whose men had been driven back by a blast of machine-gun bullets, reinforced his depleted forces with lads from other units and carried by storm a very troublesome redoubt.

A thousand acts of courage were done in this part of the line by men who knew that the lives of their comrades depended on the success of the work which they undertook to do. For example, it was necessary to send back reports to brigade headquarters, that supplies and supports might be brought up; and to maintain communication between the various company and battalion commanders. Telephone wires had been cut by bursting shells, and runners had been killed; but in spite of every difficulty and danger, messages had to be sent to and fro.

A young private who had volunteered for this difficult and dangerous work, and was on his way with a message, saw a German enter a dark passage. Though the lad was all alone, he followed the man down a flight of mud stairs into an underground cave, where he found himself face to face with eighteen Germans. Nothing dismayed, he shouted to them: "Now then, come out, and look sharp about it!" Without a moment's delay they flung up their arms, and cried "Kamerad!" "Well, then, get out," said the boy. They filed past him, and he waited until the last man left the cave. Then he followed them, and discovered that his prisoners, finding that he was all alone, had scattered. He ordered them to fall in, and fired his rifle over their heads. At this they meekly obeyed him. He formed them up, marched them down to the prisoners' cage, took his receipt for them, and went on his way with his message.

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Some of the German "storm troops" engaged in the counter-attacks were discovered to be wearing a new form of body armour. It consisted of a sheet of steel, covering the chest and abdomen and supported by curved plates resting on the shoulders. Its weight was considerable, and no doubt the storm troops found it an encumbrance in getting out of muddy trenches and moving over slippery ground. Nor did this body armour afford much protection either from bullets or from shell splinters. In appearance it recalled the breastplates of the Middle Ages. A soldier who picked up a battered and riddled specimen said that it might have come from the armoury of the Tower of London.

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A correspondent tells us that during the battle the Germans shot many of our wounded as they lay helpless on the ground. He gives, however, one instance in which the enemy acted with humanity. A wounded British officer was captured. His water-bottle and bag of rations were seized by his captors, who ate up all that he had. It was clear that they were almost starving. He asked for a sip from his water-bottle, and they let him have it; but warned him that he must not drink much, as they wanted all the water that they could get for their machine gun. They then retired, leaving the officer alone; but shortly afterwards an orderly appeared, who said that he had been sent to dress the Englishman's wound. When he had made the wounded man comfortable, he too departed. Later in the evening the officer was rescued, and was carried into his own lines. Amidst all the shocking deeds of barbarity done by the Germans, it is pleasant to come across an incident which shows that some of them can still feel "the dint of pity."

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Some very fine fighting was done by the Sherwood Foresters in the course of the battle. The scene of their attack was through Hooge, thence north-eastward by the large sheet of shallow water known as the Bellewarde Lake, and on to the ridge on which Westhoek stands. It was difficult country, very uneven, with clumps of trees and scattered German strongholds of concrete. The Notts and Derby troops had to struggle hard all day. They had little difficulty in taking the site of Hooge, for the village and all that it contained had been wiped out by our guns; but as they advanced by the lake and the wood towards the ridge, they had to face continual machine-gun fire and a very stout resistance in trenches and strong points. One trench near the lake was carried in splendid style by Northamptonshire men, who captured eighty prisoners in two batches.

The Sherwood Foresters, on their right, were held up by a specially strong position at the cross-roads near Westhoek. It had been formed out of the ruins of a roadside inn, and consisted of a nest of concrete posts, each of which contained a machine gun. The Foresters stalked these posts and attacked them with bombs. These having been captured and forty unwounded prisoners taken, they pushed on to the summit of the ridge, where other troops joined them as supports. Westhoek village and the trenches beyond were captured; but before the Midlanders could entrench themselves properly, the Germans assailed them with a storm of artillery fire. Our men had practically no shelter, and owing to the weather our guns could give them no protection. In the early afternoon of 1st August the enemy counter-attacked in great strength from two directions. These attacks were driven off, but others enabled the Germans to gain a foothold in some of our positions. The marvel was that they did not succeed in breaking the whole of our advanced line. You already know that we entirely recovered the lost ground during the fighting on 10th August. At one point in this advance a gap of 150 yards appeared in our front. The enemy discovered it, and tried to drive a wedge in; but was stopped by a couple of Lewis gunners, who fired their weapons from their shoulders.

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In the previous chapter you learned that Australians and New Zealanders were engaged in the battle. The Australian artillery behaved splendidly at a time of great trial and peril. The guns from "down under" followed up the advance very rapidly. At the exact moment teams appeared, batteries were limbered up, and off the guns went at a walk towards the ridge. When the leading batteries began to top the ridge they suddenly came under the observation of the enemy, who was holding the higher ground beyond. Almost immediately shells began to drop amongst them, and before long many German guns were concentrated on them. Then, for the first time, the column broke into a trot, and with perfect steadiness made its way through a tornado of shell-fire. You can form some idea of the coolness of the Australian drivers when I remind you that they had to guide their teams over deeply pitted ground, thick with clogging mud. It was a great sight to see these men flogging, and almost lifting, their horses out of the miry holes. One gun fell into a deep pit, and while efforts were being made to get it out a shell burst amidst the horses and killed every one of them. Not for a minute, however, did the Australians pause. The batteries which were already in position began firing, and the others proceeded to take up their stations. While they were so engaged machine-gun bullets hissed among them, and shells constantly burst at close quarters.

At this moment a whirring sound was heard overhead, and a German aeroplane swooped down upon them. So low did it fly that the gunners could see the pilot as he dropped bomb after bomb in their direction. Happily, all of them fell wide. Seeing this, he attacked with his machine gun. Six times during the day German airmen circled overhead, firing and dropping bombs. The Australians found a Lewis gun and a machine gun which had been abandoned in the neighbouring trenches, and with these and their rifles they fired at the planes while their comrades continued to hurl shells on the enemy. For six hours they were under fire, but the batteries were never silent. One of the gunners recalling that time of instant peril said, " I would rather have lived those six hours than any other day in my life."

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A correspondent tells us that the concrete " pill-boxes," on which the Germans chiefly depended to maintain their hold of the shell zone, sometimes enabled the defenders to hold out for a long time, but often proved traps for their garrisons. Our men, as you know, encircled them, and gradually crept closer and closer until they could bomb the little strongholds and kill the defenders or force them to surrender. During the battle on 31st July a " pill-box " held out until one of our men, armed with a Lewis gun, crept up to it and pushed the muzzle of his weapon through a loophole. He had not fired many rounds before the garrison signified its wish to surrender in the usual manner. From another pill-box which was encircled smoke and flame suddenly appeared. Something had gone wrong within. Immediately the occupants hoisted the white flag.

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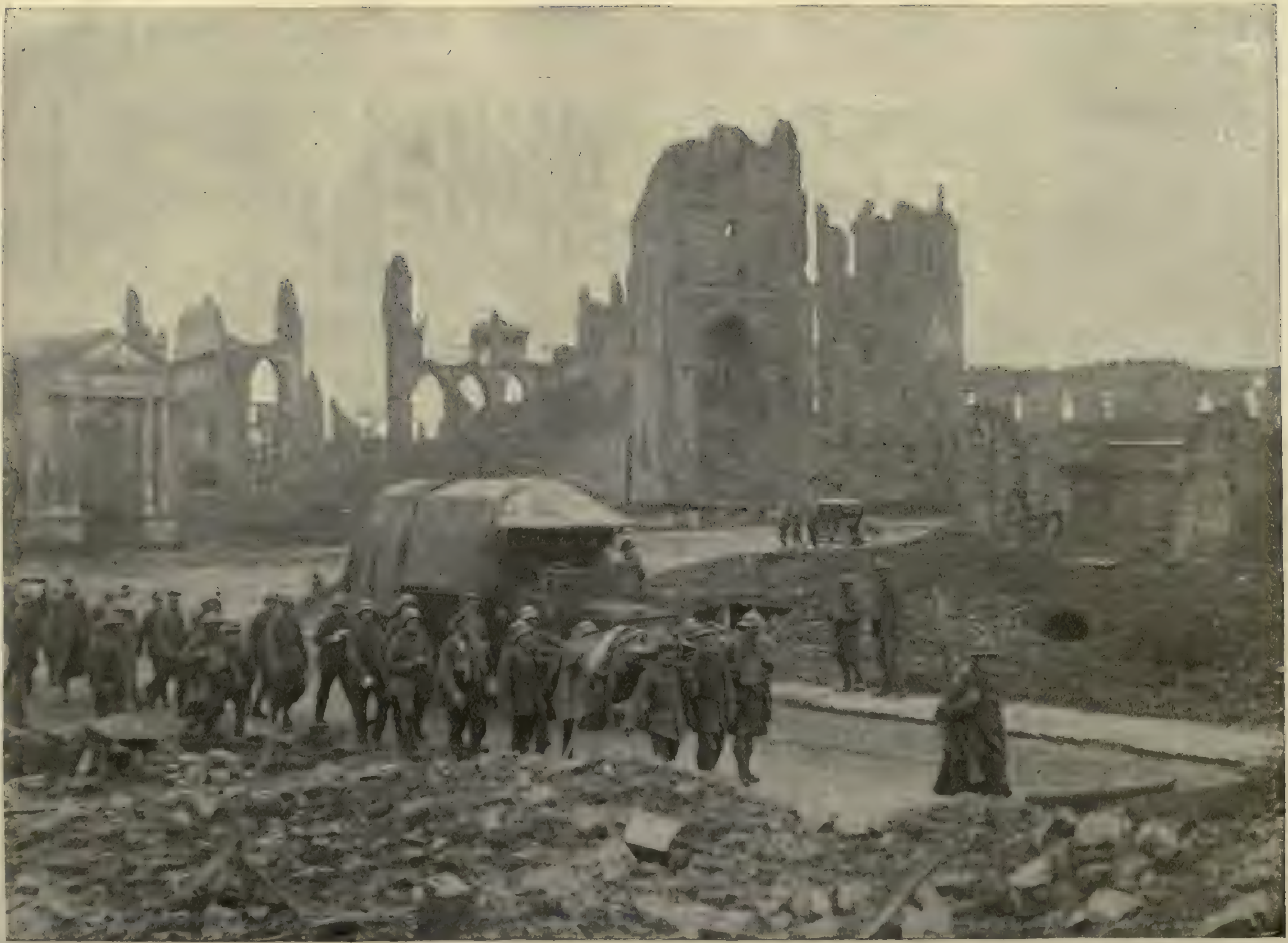
Some of the prisoners described their hardships in moving terms. They said that our task was nothing to theirs. While we were advancing over the water-logged plain and the shallow valleys, they were constantly engaged in preparing fresh



German Prisoners being marched through Ypres. [*Official Photograph.*

defences. The "pill-boxes" were all very well in their way, but trenches had to be dug and deep dug-outs had to be excavated. Every time the sponge-like ground was struck with a pick water oozed out, and before the hollow was deep enough to shelter an infantryman it was full of water. Over and over again they prepared trenches, and were forced to abandon them because they became stagnant pools. The consequence was that farms, villages, roadside cottages, and every kind of outbuilding had to be fortified, and that this work had to be done under a constant rain of shells from our guns.

The prisoners also declared that the young officers and men who had recently joined the army were not to be relied upon. Many of them were lads of eighteen, and they could not stand the terrible fire of our guns. Some grenadiers who were captured spoke very contemptuously of their new comrades, who when attacked "flocked to the rear" and made little or no attempt to defend their positions. Captured officers ascribed the poor spirit of the new-comers to the fact that they had been under-nourished for two years before enlistment. Out of 900 prisoners examined in one batch more than 25 per cent. were boys who would not have been called to the colours in peace time until the year 1918. Some of the recruits, however, fought well.

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Good service was rendered by the "Tanks." In many places they were not needed, as our infantry swept on almost unchecked. Their true value was seen when an obstinate trench or a very strong redoubt was encountered. They had to work under the greatest difficulty, for the ground was so soft that the elephantine monsters sank deep into the mud. Near Frezenberg two of our Tanks became literally embedded in front of the enemy's line; whereupon the Germans attacked them in force. With the help of infantry the assaults were repulsed, and soon afterwards, with a mighty effort, the stranded landships heaved themselves out of the mud and lumbered away safely.

You will remember that St. Julien was captured on 31st July, but had to be given up for a time. In the original capture of this village the Tanks covered themselves with glory as well as with mud. Sixty men in one strong point to the west of the village surrendered to a Tank, which, later on, paraded the streets, routing out small parties of lurking Germans from the ruins. When another Tank appeared before a fortified farm and threatened to attack it, eight officers came out and held up their hands.

I have already mentioned the Pommern Castle and Redoubt which fell to the Lancashire men. The Tank that assisted in their capture had a lively game of hide-and-seek with the garrisons of these two strongholds. When the machine guns of the castle were giving trouble, the Tank lumbered towards it; whereupon the defenders bolted into the redoubt. The Tank then slowly turned and followed them, amidst a perfect hail of bullets which dropped harmlessly from its scaly sides. The Tank, you will remember, is a slow mover, and by the time it was in position to butt the redoubt the Germans slipped back to the castle. This game might have gone on for some time, but the Lancashires came up, and by stopping up the bolt-holes put an end to it. Pommern Castle and Redoubt, with the adjoining Square Wood, were perhaps the most troublesome of all the strongholds which our men reduced that day.

A lieutenant of the Tank Corps, in a letter to friends at home, gave a striking example of the goodness of heart which our men display even to their enemies. The Tank to which the lieutenant was attached sank in the sodden ground, and could not be moved. The enemy assailed it with heavy gunfire, and the lieutenant and his comrades took refuge in a system of tunnels near at hand. "From here," says the writer of the letter, "we saw a Fritz wandering about in the open. We shouted to him to come in, but he could not hear us for the row. So two of our men insisted on going to fetch him in—simply to get him out of danger, mind you—and they succeeded in doing so, in spite of the shells. The Fritz was in an awful state, trembling all over. However, we gave him cigarettes, and something to eat, and he soon bucked up."

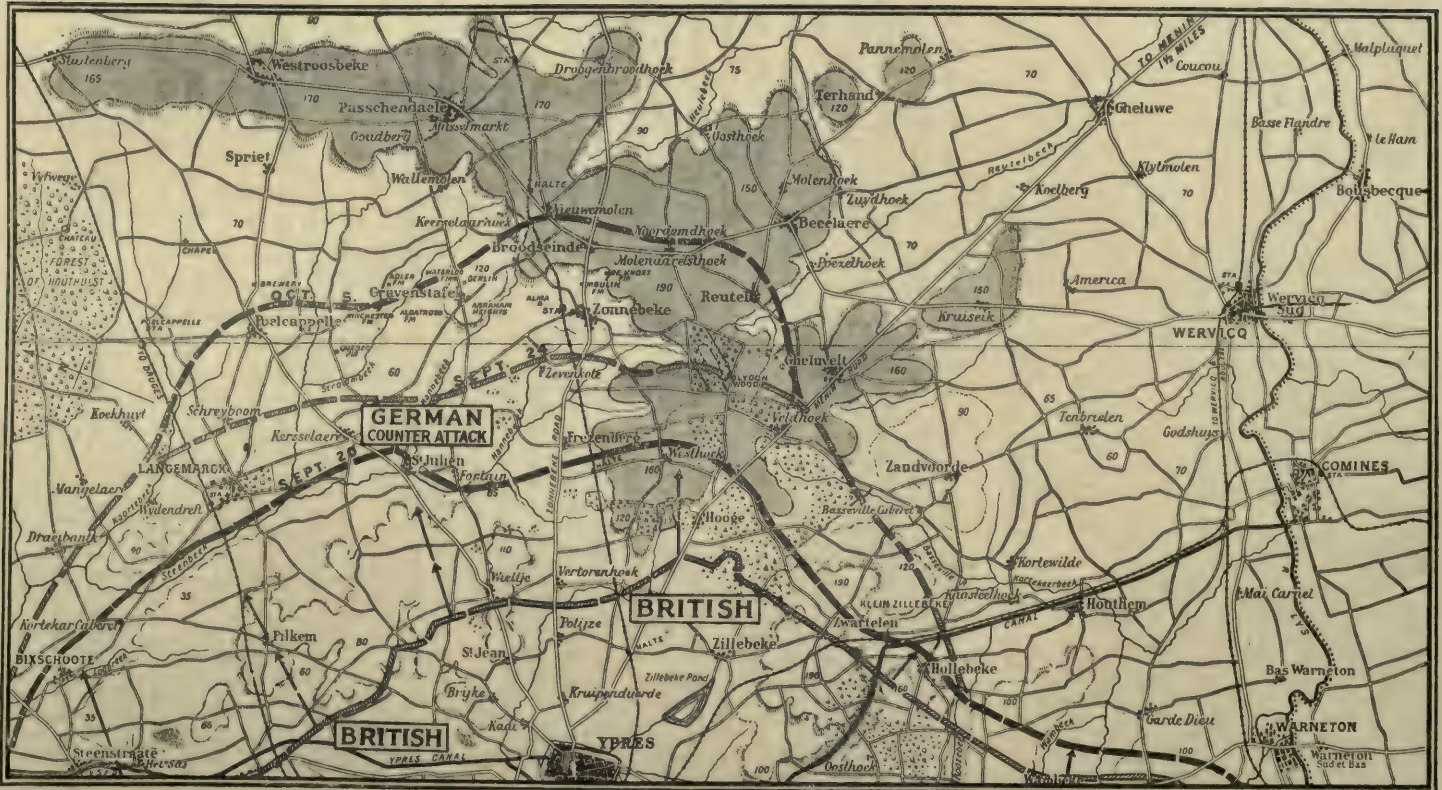
CHAPTER IV.

THE BATTLES FOR THE RIDGES.

BETWEEN the autumn of 1915 and the autumn of 1916 we made a complete change in our method of attack. At the Battle of Loos we strove to break through the enemy's line by a single operation, and failed with heavy loss. During the great offensive between the Ancre and the Somme we made no such attempt. We chose a certain portion of the enemy's front, usually no more than his first system of defences, and overwhelmed it with fierce and unceasing artillery fire. When the German trenches were utterly wrecked, we sent forward our men to occupy the ground and restore it as rapidly as possible to a defensive condition. The enemy tried hard to launch counter-attacks before we were ready to meet them, and sometimes he succeeded in winning back his lost positions. More often our men withstood all attempts to oust them, and thus were able to make their new trenches a jumping-off place for a further attack. We were content to hasten slowly.

It was only when we had a large number of big guns and an almost unlimited supply of ammunition that we could practise the new method at all. When our factories began to turn out big guns by the thousand and high-explosive shells by the million, we were able to clear the way for our infantry, and thus save very many lives. We saved still more lives when General Horne invented the "creeping barrage," and our aviators became skilful in following up the troops and directing the fire of the batteries far in the rear. The new method of attack was the outcome of our great growth in artillery power and in the use of aeroplanes for "spotting."

To meet attacks of this character, the enemy took care to hold his first line very lightly. Most of the men who were to


Westroosbeke
Passchendaele
Mosselmarkt
Goudberg
Spriet
Wallemolen
Droogenbroodhoek
Oosthoek
Terhand
Pannemolen
Gheluwe
TO MENIN 1¼ MILES
Coucou
Malplaquet
Basse Flandre
le Ham
Boursbecque
Klytmolen
Knolberg
Reutelbeek
Molenhoek
Zuydhoek
Becelaere
Poezelhoek
Nieuwemolen
Keerselaarhoek
Noordemdhoek
Broodseinde
Molenaarelsthoek
Reutel
Zonnebeke
Gravenstafel
Poelcappelle
CHATEAU FOREST OF HOUTHULST
Vyfwege
OCT. 5.
SEPT. 24
SEPT. 20
Zevenkote
Gheluvelt
MENIN ROAD
Veldhoek
America
Kruiseik
WERVICQ
Wervicq Sud
Tenbrielen
Godshuis
Zandvoorde
COMINES
GERMAN COUNTER ATTACK
Schreyboom
Kerselaere
Koekhuyt
LANGEMARCK
Mangelaere
Wydendreft
Draeibank
St. Julien
Fortuin
Frezenberg
Westhoek
Hooge
Basseville Cabaret
Kortewilde
Houthem
Mai Carnel
Vertorenhoek
Wieltje
BRITISH
Potijze
Zillebeke
Zillebeke Pond
KLEIN ZILLEBEKE
Zwartelen
Hollebeke
CANAL
Kortekar Cabaret
BIXSCHOOTE
Pilkem
St. Jean
Bryke
Kruipenduerde
Kaai
YPRES
BRITISH
YPRES CANAL
Steenstraate
Oosthoek
Garde Dieu
Bas Warneton
WARNETON
Warneton Sud et Bas
LYS
TO BRUGES
Steenbeek
ZONNEBEKE ROAD
POLYGON WOOD

Map to illustrate the British and French advance on the Ypres Salient between September 20 and October 5, 1917.

resist our troops, when they appeared, took refuge from the storm of artillery in deep dug-outs. As soon as the barrage passed their position to form a defensive curtain of fire behind, they came up and plied their machine guns vigorously. Many of them did not come up at all; and the chief work which our men had to do was to rout them out of their lurking-places with bomb and bayonet, and send them back to the prisoners' cage in the rear. Frequently the defenders were so cowed and dazed by the awful gun-fire that they made but little resistance. In most parts of the Ypres district it was impossible to dig deep caves and tunnels because the ground was water-logged. In these circumstances the Germans set up all over the shell zone those little concrete forts which our men called "pill-boxes." Each of these little fortresses had to be captured by a separate siege.

The German General Staff knew that nothing could stand against our fierce bombardment, and that their trenches could not be held when high-explosive shells burst so rapidly on them that the whole line resembled a series of spouting volcanoes. Their plan was to wait until our men were in their wrecked trenches, and then suddenly hurl upon them large numbers of "storm troops." These troops were chosen for the task because they were specially brave and specially well disciplined. They were, in fact, the cream of the German armies. In the course of their counter-attacks they were bound to lose many men, and these, you must remember, would be their best and bravest. This suited our book exactly, for our main object was not so much to drive the enemy out of Belgium as to exhaust his man-power.

In Chapter II. you learned that by smashing stretches of the enemy's trenches, by occupying the ruined positions, and beating off counter-attacks, we managed to secure the slight ridge of land on which stand the villages of Pilkem, St. Julien, Frezenberg, and Westhoek. So far we had not touched the enemy's main defensive line, which lay along a higher ridge more to the east. We may call this ridge the Passchendaele Ridge, because the village of that name stands close to its crest. If you examine the map, you will see that the Passchendaele Ridge is crescent-shaped, and rests, as it were, on two pillars.

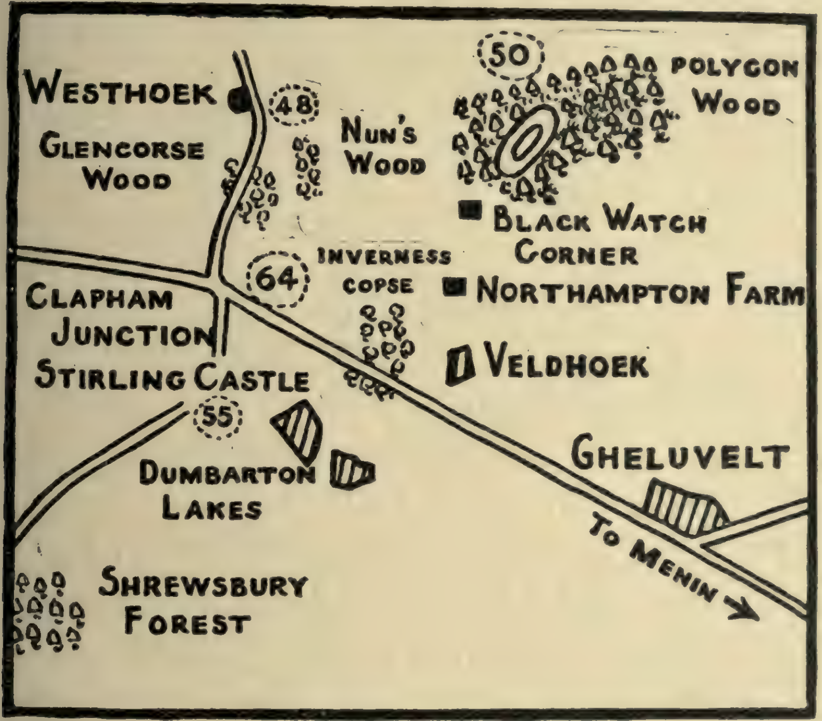
The northern pillar is that extensive stretch of swampy woodland known as the Forest of Houthulst; the southern pillar consists of the wooded heights near Gheluvelt. The summit of these heights is on the Menin road, about a mile to the south of the hamlet of Westhoek, and is known to military men as "Hill 64;" our soldiers called it "Clapham Junction." To the east of Westhoek the highest ground in the neighbourhood is a hummock, marked on the map 48. The great aim of the Germans was to hold on to the points 48 and 64, and the highest levels of ground between them.

You will notice that their task was made easier because the ground between Westhoek and the Menin road was tangled with woods. Nuns' Wood, the southern part of which our men called Glencorse Wood, lies directly south of the hamlet, and Polygon Wood extends to the south-east. At the time of which I am speaking those woods were simply wildernesses of broken tree stumps, and were crossed and recrossed by old trenches. They were easy to hold and very difficult to capture.

As you follow the story of the battles in front of Ypres, you will notice that the Germans made their most desperate resistance in this district. I think you understand why. Once they lost this southern pillar of high ground and tangled wood, the road to Menin would be open. You will remember that on 10th August we managed to get a footing in Glencorse Wood, and that we successfully beat back six attempts on the part of the enemy to thrust us out.

On 16th August Sir Douglas Haig struck another blow, and again the French co-operated with us. While they pushed north-eastward from Bixschoote, our troops made a bid for Langemarck. I am sure you have not forgotten this village. It will be ever memorable for the gallant stand made by Welsh and Gloucestershire regiments on October 23, 1914. On that day a British brigade held up a whole German army corps and forced it to retire, leaving 1,500 dead in front of their trenches. It was at Langemarck, too, that the Germans first let loose their poison gas upon our men. During the attack which I am about to describe our right flank was directed against the wood-cumbered high ground on both sides of the Ypres-Menin road.

The struggle for Langemarck was very fierce. The enemy had massed guns on the ridge, and our men had to advance through a very heavy barrage of artillery and machine-gun fire over ground that was one vast quagmire, where they sometimes sank to the waist, or even disappeared altogether when they fell into shell-holes. A correspondent tells us that the courage of the men who attacked over such ground was wonderful. "The grim, stubborn way in which our soldiers made their way through bogs in which they slipped and fell and stuck fast, while the enemy played machine-gun bullets on to their lines and flung high explosives over the whole stretch of morass, is one of the most splendid and tragic things in the whole story of the war."


50
Polygon Wood
Westhoek
48
Glencorse Wood
Nun's Wood
Black Watch Corner
64
Inverness Copse
Northampton Farm
Clapham Junction
Veldhoek
Stirling Castle
55
Dumbarton Lakes
Gheluvelt
To Menin
Shrewsbury Forest

An oblong blockhouse, with walls of concrete ten feet thick, blocked the road. As soon as our men appeared, the Germans inside slammed down an iron door and fired machine guns through the loopholes. Our bombers prowled round like hungry wolves stalking their prey. At length they surrounded the little fort, and the garrison yielded. From another pill-box came a steady blast of fire, and several desperate rushes were made upon it. At last, when many of our men lay dead and wounded around it, one of our machine gunners managed to thrust the barrel of his weapon through a loophole and sweep the chamber with a flood of bullets.

Langemarck was entered, and then began fierce fights in the cellars between men who would not surrender and men who would not turn back. Much of the fighting was done by groups of English soldiers who had lost their officers during the advance, but were led by privates, who commanded their fellows with much skill and courage. One of these privates made his way to an officer, who was lying wounded in a shell-hole, and asked, "What shall I do, sir? We have lost our officers and our N.C.O.'s." "Try to carry on," said the wounded officer, and the man took command and carried on as though to the manner born.

The recapture of Langemarck was a sore blow to the Germans. In their account of the day's fighting they confessed that our troops had penetrated their lines near Langemarck, and then they went on to say that, aided by reinforcements, we had pushed on towards Poelcapelle. "At this point they were met by a counter-attack on the part of our fighting reserves. In an irresistible assault the foremost enemy troops and the rear units were thrown back. By the evening, after tough fighting, Langemarck and our lost position were again in our hands. . . . In spite of heavy sacrifices the English had accomplished nothing! By this repulse we gained a full victory. Unshaken, with high spirits, our front stands ready for new battles."

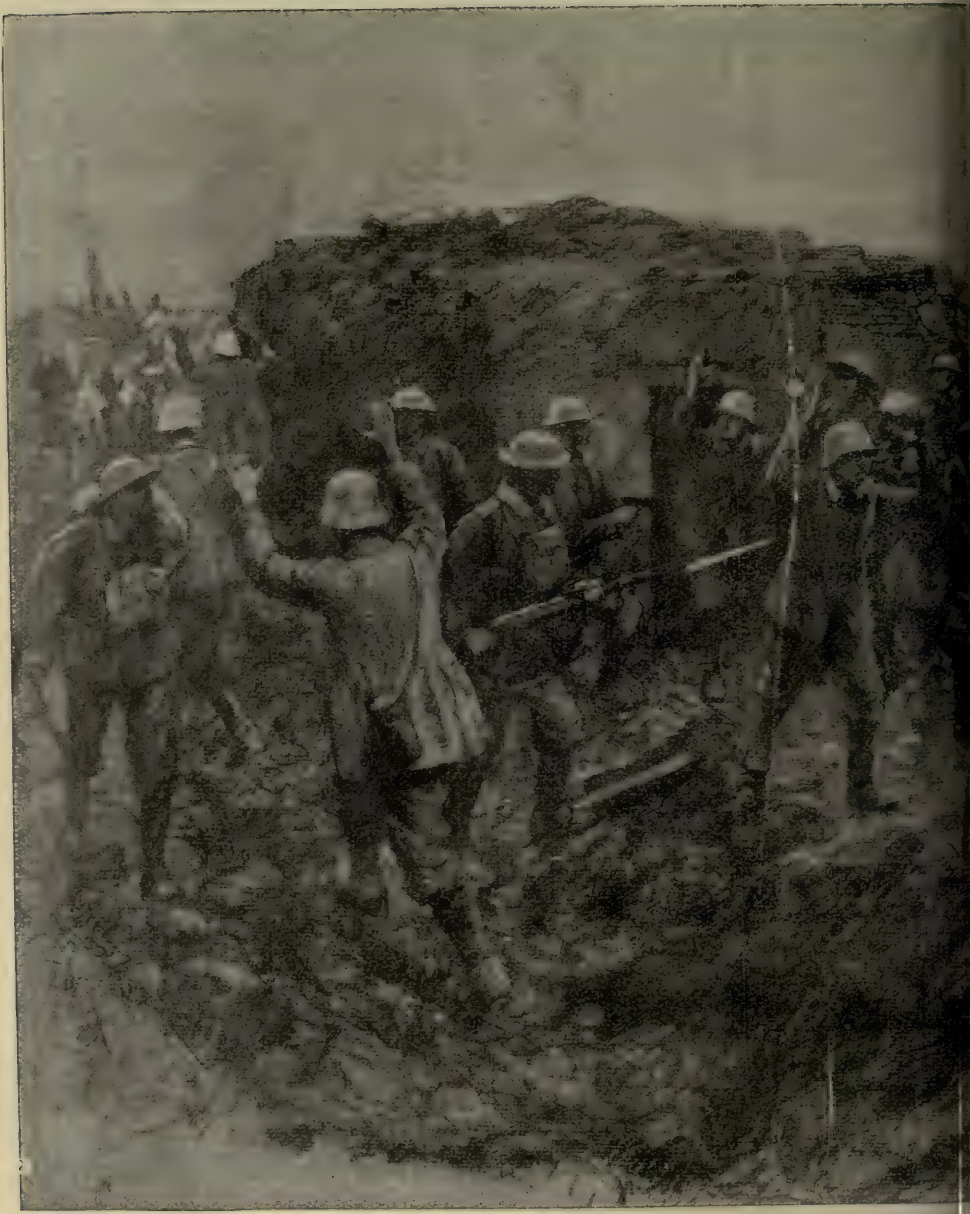
The whole story, as told by the Germans, was a lie. There had been no battle at Poelcapelle at all; it was more than a mile from Langemarck, and was outside the sphere of operations for the day. Further, the enemy did not recover Langemarck, nor did he make any attempt to do so. At the close of the battle British troops still held not only the fiercely-contested village, but a considerable length of the German trenches, 800 yards to the north of it. On 18th August, by way of putting matters right, the Germans published another fable, in which they said that they had lost Langemarck on the 17th, owing to a British surprise attack. No such attack took place; nor was any attack necessary, for the village was captured by us on the early morning of the 16th, and had never been lost.

Our attack on the southern pillar of the ridge was not so successful—partly because the position was very strong, and partly because the best German troops had been concentrated in this part of the line to bar the way to Menin. A correspondent thus describes the advance on both sides of the Ypres-Menin road :—

> " Lying out all night in the wet mud under heavy fire, our men attacked at dawn up by Glencorse Wood in the direction of Polygon Wood. On the right they came at once under blasts of fire from machine guns. The men of the London Regiment fought their way forward with splendid spirit, through Glencorse Wood and round to the north of Nuns' Wood, avoiding the most deeply flooded ground, which was one big boggy lake. Parties of the Middlesex went into Polygon Wood and actually brought back prisoners. At a strong point near the Hooge-Gheluvelt road they killed thirty-four Germans and captured redoubt after redoubt. But there were Germans still left in other concrete houses near by, and they were very numerous in the Zonnebeke position on the north-west.
>
> " Very soon counter-attacks developed. The Londoners were exhausted after their dreadful night and their hard fighting over foul ground. They were in exposed positions, and were shut in by terrible gun-fire. Our airmen reported that they saw isolated groups of London boys fighting separate battles against great odds. The enemy was encircling them, and they were trying to hold on so that their comrades could withdraw in good order. A signalled message that found its way to Headquarters told a similar story. The message, which was from a Middlesex officer, was to this effect : ' Am in a shell-hole before second objective and two strong points of the enemy. Have ten men with me. We are surrounded, and heavy machine-gun fire is being turned on us. Regret no course but to surrender. Can't see any of our forces.' "

Despite such regrettable incidents, the results of the day, taking them as a whole, were satisfactory. Though our advance was not so rapid as we could wish, we had made headway. During the fighting we had captured more than two thousand prisoners, including fifty-five officers, and had seized twenty-four guns.

From 16th August to 20th September there were no important events on the Ypres front. Our guns, however, were never silent, and our infantry made numerous trench raids for the purpose of capturing prisoners and of getting information from them. In raids of this character our men excel, and so do the French. The Germans, on the other hand, were rarely successful when they tried to pounce down upon our lines. German troops, as you know, are trained to rely upon their officers and not upon themselves. When their leaders fall



The capture of "Pill-Boxes" on the way to Zonnebeke. Tak

(*From the picture by A. Forrestier. By permi*

risoners from five strong points near Retaliation Farm.
f The Illustrated London News.)

they show no enterprise or resource, but are as sheep without a shepherd.

On 22nd August our men gained a firm footing in the western part of what is known to the British army as Inverness Copse—that is, the stretch of wood on both sides of the Menin road, to the south-east of point 64. Let me remind you that this uplift of ground is only some forty to fifty feet above the level of the plain. A Scottish or a Welsh boy or girl would be much amused at the idea of calling any of the ridges in front of Ypres "heights." Nevertheless, they overlook the plain, and are therefore very useful for observation. Point 64, I have already told you, was important to the Germans, because it enabled them to command the Menin road as far as Gheluvelt. On 24th August the enemy made a determined effort to thrust us out of Inverness Copse. Our guns threw a barrage across the wood, and our stubborn infantry made great havoc of the advancing enemy. Nevertheless, we were forced to fall back slightly.

The German counter-attacks continued, but all to no purpose. A correspondent tells us that at this time the enemy went in terror of our artillery; and that, with the help of our aeroplanes, we flung ten shells upon the enemy for every one that he hurled upon us. Though very hard pressed, and terribly uncomfortable in the wet, sodden trenches, our men were full of cheerfulness. It is said that the Royal Fusiliers, who were holding a line of battered ditch and shell-hole, which the Germans mercilessly pounded, kept up their spirits by singing an army version of the song "In these Hard Times"—

"Oh, if you live to be ninety-four,
And carry on to the end of the war,
You may get leave, but not before,
In these hard times."

Their comrades in the support lines heard them and joined in the refrain. Meanwhile the Fusiliers collected their dead, cared for their wounded, and squatted in their miserable shelters. While the great shells shrieked overhead, or flung mud upon them, they continued to sing:—

"You may get more or you may get less,
But apple and plum's your best, I guess,
For the strawberry jam's for the sergeants' mess,
In these hard times."

On 20th September Sir Douglas Haig struck a third blow. At 5.40 in the morning his troops advanced on a wide front between the Ypres-Roulers road and Ypres-Comines Canal. On the right, English county troops captured woods north of the canal, and pushed on towards Zandvoorde. In the centre, Australians and other troops stormed Nuns' Wood, Glencorse Wood, and Inverness Copse, and managed to get a firm footing in part of Polygon Wood. Further north, London, Highland, and South African regiments pushed close up to Zonnebeke. The attack was successful all along the line : all our objectives were reached, except for one small spot of 200 to 300 yards near Tower Hamlets, which stands half a mile to the west of Gheluvelt and south of the Ypres-Menin road. Some 2,000 prisoners were taken.

We had gained a very important success, for we had seized the high ground which I have called point 64, and had thus secured a footing on the southern pillar of the Passchendaele Ridge. A correspondent tells us that we made great preparations for this attack, and that the Germans were fully aware of what was coming. He also tells us that the Australians went through Glencorse Wood without much trouble, though they had to bomb several " pill-boxes." On the western edge of the wood they came up against very strong positions, which impeded them for a time. Nevertheless, within four hours, an Australian flag was gaily fluttering at the point which they had set out to reach. The Germans announced that " the British attack had been brought to a standstill by noon." This was quite true : the attack had then ended, because the day's work was done.

We owed our success to the excellence of our preparations, and to the rapid advance of our men. As soon as the day's objectives were reached—that is, at a little after ten in the morning—the counter-attacks began. Before the day was over, some parts of the line had been assaulted six or seven times. Our men, however, were thoroughly alert, and so were the gunners in the rear. In one case our observers signalled to the guns that " storm troops " of the enemy were massing for an attack, and within five seconds our shells fell fast and thick upon them and swept them away. Rarely did the enemy manage to come within range of our rifles, but when he did so he suffered terribly.

Our losses were light, but those of the Germans were very heavy. " German dead," writes a correspondent, " lie everywhere. I have spoken with men from nearly all parts of the line, and have heard always the same thing, often in the same words, ' I never saw so many German dead.' " One hears of fifty bodies lying around one concrete fort, and over one hundred about a fringe of wood, of fourteen in a single shell-hole, and of a trench literally full. The same writer goes on to describe the Passchendaele Ridge, which was slowly but surely passing into our hands :—

> " Along the ridge trees still stand reasonably complete against the sky-line, and Passchendaele still presents the outward appearance of a village—red roofs gleaming in the sun among foliage, with the church tower and a solitary factory chimney thrusting up well clear of the trees and the house-tops. But when you examine more closely you see that no building seems to be really whole. The largest structure in the village has only two walls with their peaked ends standing. Another red roof ends in a jagged line where half of it has been blown away. It seemed as if, in half an hour, one could have strolled across to it over the sunlit, open, undulating ground. It appeared incredible that between me and Passchendaele two mighty armies lay face to face."

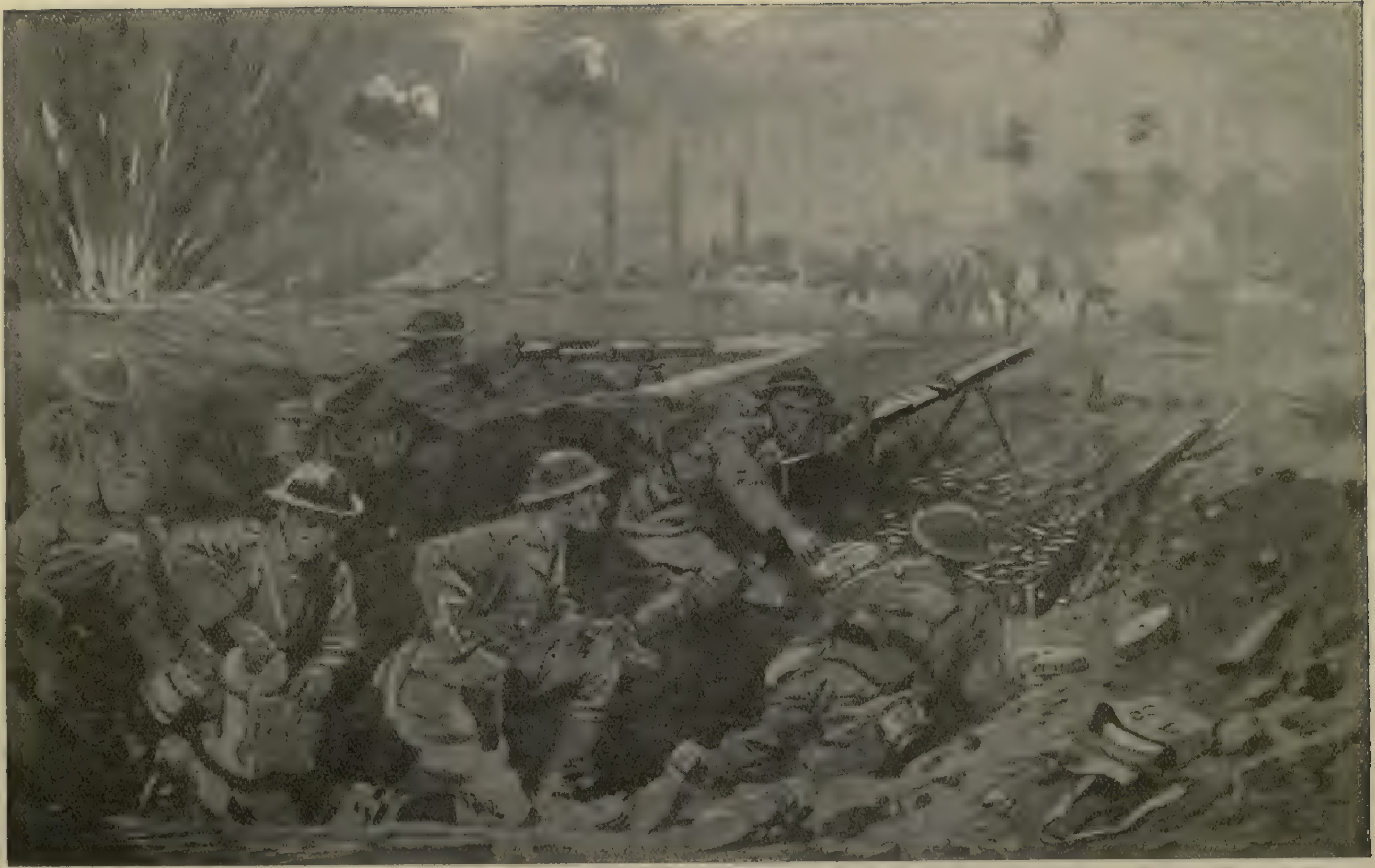
In the region east and north-east of St. Julien the Londoners fought a very hard fight. Our correspondent met a small Cockney soldier with a broken forearm, and blood on his head and face, and asked him how he felt. " We've got 'em biled," the man said. Oh yes, he was hit. Bullet from nowhere did it, just when he was having the time of his life. But that was nothing. " We've got 'em biled." One of the concrete machine-gun posts of the enemy was rushed most gallantly by a sergeant and five men, who went at it " bald-headed," and with bomb and rifle forced it to surrender. All the Londoners behaved with great gallantry.

Only at selected places, usually against fortified farms, were the Tanks used. Some time previously, in the swampy region between the southern end of Inverness Copse and Dumbarton Lake, one of our Tanks had stuck fast in the mud, and had fallen into the enemy's hands. Since then the Germans had covered it with concrete and turned it into a fort. It was supposed to be a strong point, but it was captured, and with it thirty prisoners. The Yorkshire, and other north country troops who took Inverness Copse, showed splendid dash. They found concrete fortresses in rows barring their way, but they carried them one after the other. From a series of " pill-boxes " on the Menin road they extracted 200 Germans. They also captured a few field guns, many machine guns, and a large number of trench mortars.

You will remember that we failed to take a stretch of from 200 to 300 yards on the high ground at Tower Hamlets. This increased the difficulty of making progress in the woods to the south-west, where mixed English county regiments were held up for a time by concreted posts. A sergeant actually rushed one of these posts single-handed. After our troops had reached their final position, the enemy was seen advancing to the counter-attack, led by men carrying flame apparatus. In a few seconds our guns got to work, and flame men and storm troops alike were blown to fragments. From every part of the line came stories of how our men hunted the Germans round their " pill-boxes "—" like children playing tag round a table." The Scottish regiments were specially successful in this work. They stalked the " pill-boxes," thrust their bayonets through the loopholes, and shouted to the inmates in " braid Scots " to come out and surrender.

On the 25th the Germans won a brief success. At dawn, under cover of a thick mist, they launched a powerful attack upon our lines between Tower Hamlets and Polygon Wood, and succeeded in forcing their way into our trenches at certain points. There was desperate fighting all the morning, and at noon the enemy sent forward fresh battalions to increase his gains, but could advance no further. Then we began to attack, and early in the afternoon drove the enemy out of the positions which he had captured, and re-established our line.

Next day (26th September) we won another success. Our troops advanced on a six-mile front, from Tower Hamlets to a point east of St. Julien. The Germans made a very strong resistance, and not until the end of the day did we reach all our objectives. The main attack was in the centre, where Australians cleared Polygon Wood and the trenches to the east of it. On their left, English, Scottish, and Welsh battalions pushed forward for a good mile, and captured Zonnebeke. Meanwhile North Midland and London Territorials advanced towards Passchendaele. Our airmen did splendid work during the battle. They brought down seventeen German aeroplanes,



At Bay in a 9.2-Shell Hole.

(*From the picture by F. de Haenen. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

This picture illustrates a heroic episode during the fighting described in this chapter. During a counter-attack a body of Germans managed to break through a gap in our line. They rushed forward, but were stopped by a part of our men holding a shell-hole with two Lewis guns. Our men held off the advancing enemy until reinforcements arrived; whereupon the surviving Germans surrendered.

drove down six out of control, and lost only one of their own machines. Over sixteen hundred prisoners were taken.

By this time you have guessed what Sir Douglas Haig was trying to do. He was trying to thrust out a big salient on both sides of the Ypres-Menin road, in order to divide the enemy's forces which were operating north and south of the road. Should he be successful, the Germans would be forced to make another retirement "according to plan." As you know, we were continually winning ground; but the German Staff pretended to make light of it, and to say that our gains were trifling. Hindenburg was just as bombastic as ever. "Where we fight, we conquer," he said. "Where we stand, we remain." He forgot, however, to mention that his men were continually making stands in the rear of their former positions, and that at no place did they remain long.

The Australians won great praise for their work in the Polygon Wood. They did everything that they were set to do; and in addition, after beating off the counter-attacks made on them, gave the greatest help to their English and Scottish comrades who were having trouble on their right. The Australians were assailed by gun-fire from a mound at the north-east end of the Polygon Racecourse, and were much sniped from the south-east; but they were never checked, and they captured 600 prisoners, together with a number of machine guns, which they promptly turned on the enemy. The hardest fighting of the day took place on the old battleground, to the north and south of the Menin road. It was in this part of the line that we were forced back on the 25th, after nearly twenty-four hours' continuous struggle.

Sir Douglas Haig, in his account of the battle of the 26th, mentioned the heroic stand of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who held out all night in a forward position, where they were surrounded by the enemy. How they came to be thus cut off was afterwards explained. Under tremendous German shelling and heavy counter-attacks our men had given way. Certain companies of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were immediately rushed up to fill the gap in the broken line. There they held on in spite of all that the Germans could do to oust them. They were still there when the Australians came bursting through the wood next day to their relief.

On 4th October the Germans brought up five fresh divisions, including the 4th Guards Division, and prepared for a counter-attack on a grand scale. The intention was to recapture Zonnebeke, and to wrest from us all the Polygon Wood area down to the high ground on the Menin road. Their attack was timed for seven o'clock in the morning, and we forestalled them by an hour.

Our attack was an utter surprise. The enemy troops, massed for attack but not ready to advance, were simply overwhelmed in many parts of the front, and ran or surrendered as our troops came on. Their losses were tremendous. Over 4,400 prisoners were taken, and it is said that three German divisions were wiped out. Though the weather was wet and stormy, our men reached their objectives before midday. If you follow the line marked 5th October on the map,* you will see the extent of our gains. When the day's fighting came to an end, the British line was practically what it was when the first German thrust was made against it in October 1914.

At the close of the first week of October the whole of the southern pillar of the Passchendaele Ridge was in our hands, and further north we were pushing forward towards the village which is close to its highest point. During the two months' fighting we had captured over 12,000 prisoners, including 304 officers, and had seized much war material. Despite the fiercest and most desperate counter-attacks our line had stood firm.

Before I close my account of the Ypres battles down to 5th October, let me summarize our gains. Our main objective was the long straggling Passchendaele Ridge, the very last height before we reached the dead level of the Flanders plain. We made our first push towards it on 31st July, and in the minor fighting that followed slowly crept nearer and nearer to it. On 20th September, in the battle of the Menin road, we made good our hold on point 64; and in the battle of Polygon Wood, on 26th September, we advanced a full mile. Our capture of Zonnebeke on the same day carried us half-way up the Passchendaele slopes, and on 5th October we were on the highest part of it, between the Menin road and Broodseinde. The story of our further successes will be told in a future chapter.

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* See page 50.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE CANADIANS WON HILL 70 AND CLOSED IN ON LENS.

NOW I must hark back to 15th August, and tell you how the Canadians, in the most dashing fashion, carried a hill which will ever be famous in the history of the war. Hill 70, which is really no hill at all, but a low, bare hummock of ground, criss-crossed by trenches and burrowed with dug-outs, rises on the northern side of the city of Lens, behind the village of Loos. It stands in the midst of miners' cottages, slag heaps, and pitheads, and the country round about it resembles a colliery district in North England. "Lest we forget," let me remind you of the tragic scenes which were enacted on this hill on September 1915.

On the 25th of that month we made a determined attempt to break through the German lines between La Bassée and Lens. On the left the attack was confided to the 15th Division, composed wholly of Scots, and to the 47th Division of Londoners. By nine in the morning the Londoners had carried the great slag heap known as the Double Crassier, and had broken into the shattered streets of Loos. Meanwhile the Highlanders of the 15th Division had captured Loos Redoubt, and had joined hands with their London comrades beneath the so-called "Tower Bridge." Together they cleared Loos, and then the Highlanders, with the Camerons and Gordons leading, pushed on towards Hill 70. They rushed up the western slope, stormed the redoubt at the top, and without pausing to secure it, sped down the eastern slope into the outskirts of Cité St. Auguste. They had made an advance of four miles, had pierced the last line of German trenches, and were in a district literally studded with machine guns. The redoubt on the hill

Captured but contented. A German Officer taken prisoner on Hill 70.

(Canadian official picture.)

opened fire again, and from either flank they were fiercely assailed. By this time their numbers had been sadly thinned, they had no supports on their flanks, and no reserves were following them up. Had supports and reserves been available, Lens would probably have fallen that day.

The Highlanders had gone too far, and they were now hidden in the fog and smoke of the eastern slopes from the eyes of their comrades, who were battling against the redoubt on the hill. They must be recalled, and two officers volunteered to go forward with the order for them to retire. Both fell; but the order reached the stragglers, who turned, and began to fight their way through the encircling fire. Few of them returned to the British lines. "All down the slope towards Lens lay the tartans—Gordon and Black Watch, Seaforth and Cameron—like the drift left on the shore when the tide has ebbed." Hill 70 had been won and lost again, and it remained in the enemy's hands for well-nigh two years. You are now to hear how the men who captured Vimy Ridge seized and held the hill on which the Highlanders had made such unavailing sacrifices.

In Chapter XXXIII. of our seventh volume I told you how the Canadians gradually closed in on Lens. By the end of April 1917 they were less than half a mile south of the suburban mining village of Avion, and the western suburbs were in their hands. A correspondent tells us that Lens is hemmed in by these colliery villages, which are continuous with the city itself. There are networks of paved streets communicating with each other, so that it is possible to walk for miles without leaving the shadow of the cottages. "You can walk from the German front line into the market-place of Lens, and believe all the while that you are in the same town. Thus it is difficult to determine when there is fighting in the streets of Lens itself."

The Germans had thoroughly fortified the innumerable hiding-places in the mining villages. They had driven their trenches through streets and across vegetable gardens, and had linked them up with slag heaps. So formidable was this maze of defences that the Canadians had to be content with slow but sure advances. In the words of one of their officers, they never attempted "to bite off more than they could chew."

The attack on 15th August was made against the northern defences of Lens, and the main objective was Hill 70, which commands the city from the north. At 4.25 a.m., just at the beginning of dawn, when the sky, which had been overcast with heavy gray clouds, cleared for a few moments, our massed guns gave mouth in terrible chorus. Mr. Philip Gibbs thus describes the bombardment which opened the battle :—

> "From all the ruins around, separate villages of ruins, joining up with the streets of Lens itself, red flames gushed up where our batteries fired at a hot pace, and where the shells burst there were long, low flashes spreading across a sky heavy and black with storm clouds. Over the German lines, and the houses where they held the cellars, the shells burst in a tumult which had a sudden beginning just before the dawn. Above all the smoke and fire there were fountains of wonderfully bright light of burning gold, and of running flame all scarlet and alive. The golden light was from our smoke-producing rockets, and the running flame was from drums of boiling oil which we fired into the enemy's trenches."

A yellow crescent moon, pale and clear, shone above the waiting men, but was soon obscured by the heavy smoke which drifted from the big guns.

At the appointed moment the Canadians went forward, and were soon lost in the smoke. They bombed their way through the first German trenches, and in the most methodical manner cleared the maze of alley-ways and dug-outs that seamed the face of Hill 70. The gunners had done their work well, and most of the survivors of the bombardment were in a pitiable condition. In some places they fought stubbornly; but in most places they ran wildly into Lens and on through the deserted streets seeking a place of safety. The Canadians complained that the enemy would not wait to meet them.

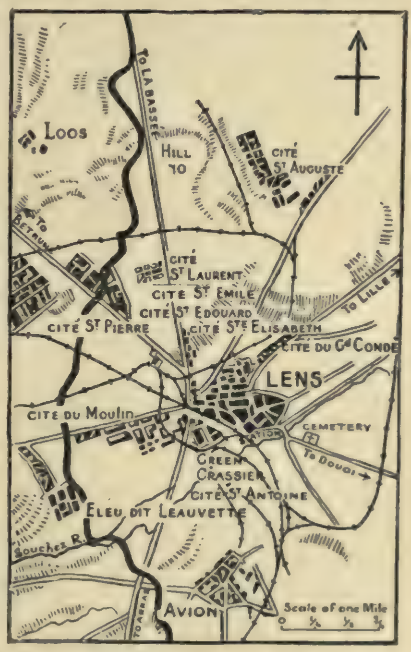
The capture of the famous hill was easy, for the garrison consisted mainly of young soldiers who dared not stand up to the veteran Canadians. "It was a walk over," said one of these heroes. "I knew we should do the trick, and all my pals were of the same mind." A correspondent thus describes the young prisoners :—

> "Some of these boys were herded along the roads between the slag heaps, shaken and very frightened, and cowering under the furious bombardment of their own guns, which were hammering at our line. One lad, who could not have been more then seventeen, was scarcely able to drag his feet over the rough road. His pinched, white face was obscured by the shadow of a great shrapnel helmet, which gave him a funny top-heavy appearance, and he was on the verge of tears. The Canadians were very kind to these wretched youths. They gave them cigarettes and sips of coffee, and

> attended to those who were wounded. Not all the prisoners were of this poor type. Many of them were hard, capable soldiers who fought to the last."

Soon after the Canadians took Hill 70 the enemy began to bombard it fiercely, and the whole ridge looked like a collection of factory chimneys vomiting columns of black smoke on a foggy day. The shells fell not only on the hill but on the industrial suburbs, which lie between it and Lens. The heavy shells, we are told,

> "came howling across the wilderness of bricks and slag heaps, and broke into gruff enormous coughs, out of which black demons of smoke rose like evil genii out of the bottle. An hour or two later the sun shone brightly through the clouds; and these cities of strife, girdled by cornfields in which the stooks were standing, and by green hills across which the fierce tide of slaughter had swept, leaving them in peace again, were flooded with fresh glinting light, so that the scene was rich in colour.
>
> "There was not a figure to be seen on Hill 70; not a movement of life among the houses around Lens. The Canadians had gone across in the smoke, and now they were hidden among the ruins. The only life was that of shell-fire, and it has a life of its own, though it is meant for death."


To La Bassée
Loos
Hill 70
Cité St Auguste
To Bethu
Cité St Laurent
Cité St Emile
Cité St Edouard
Cité St Pierre
Cité Ste Elisabeth
Cité du Gd Condé
To Lille
Lens
Cité du Moulin
Cemetery
To Douai
Green Crassier
Cité St Antoine
Eleu dit Leauvette
Souchez R.
Avion
To Arra
Scale of one Mile
0 ¼ ½ ¾

The Canadians had disappeared into the houses, the cellars, and the tunnels, where fighting at close quarters went on with bomb and bayonet. This man-to-man struggle was quite to the liking of the Canadians, and they conducted it with great success. A writer says that the best work which they had so far done was in rounding up the enemy from his underground refuges.

Counter-attacks began almost immediately, and were of the most desperate character. As you know, the Germans make these attacks with their bravest and best disciplined soldiers. Many of the attempts to regain the lost ground were broken by our artillery and machine-gun fire. In some cases the "storm troops" penetrated our trenches and engaged in grim hand-to-hand fighting with our men. One Canadian unit which beat off a very determined attack counted between four hundred and five hundred dead on its immediate front.

A story is told that a Canadian battalion commander, in a forward position, was suddenly called up by telephone and informed that there were Germans in his rear. For some time he refused to believe it, but suddenly broke off the conversation with the exclamation, "By Jove, they are!" For the next two hours and a half all telephone connection ceased. When it was resumed, Headquarters learned what had happened in the interval. The battalion commander had rallied all his staff—batmen, clerks, servants, cooks, and everybody he could lay hands on—and with these he had gone out and smitten the enemy hip and thigh.

On the 21st another advance was made from the newly-won positions towards the heart of the city. Both sides opened a very heavy artillery fire, and while the Canadians went forward the Germans came out to meet them with far greater numbers. The first thin waves of Canadians, straggling out in groups of twos and threes, had to meet an almost solid line of Germans. Nevertheless, they held them. Bitter hand-to-hand fighting took place, every Canadian having several Germans against him. Reinforcements arrived, and gradually the enemy was thrust back towards his own lines. Fresh Germans, "storm troops," were hurried up, but they suffered the same fate; and the Canadians, pressing forward, reached the first line of German trenches, where the enemy was in great strength.

The Canadians, driving the defeated Germans before them, charged the trenches with the utmost fury. They broke through two belts of wire, and a desperate combat raged up and down the whole length of the trenches. Meanwhile the guns on both sides had ceased to fire, lest they should destroy their own men, now locked in savage combat. When the tumult died away, the Canadians were in possession of the whole line of trench, which was literally heaped with German dead.

Elsewhere there was the same desperate resistance, especially in the western suburb, known as Cité du Moulin, where the Germans had constructed a very formidable line of defensive works south of the railway line. This was the last barrier which defended the inner city. During the struggle the Canadians pierced this line, and pushed into Lens to within five hundred yards of the railway station. It was clear that the Germans meant to hold the city to the last gasp, in spite of their very grave losses.

On the 23rd the Canadians edged forward at several points, especially on the south side of the city, where Prussian battalions engaged them in desperate hand-to-hand fighting. Our main success was to carry a great slag heap full of machine-gun posts and dug-outs, known as the Green Crassier. This dump filled most of the space between three groups of goods yards, from which, before the war, coal trains were dispatched. It had been honeycombed with tunnels, the entrances to which were held with machine guns, and the garrison were able to make their way to and from Lens by secret alley-ways underground. The Crassier was a very important bastion, and its fall would prevent the enemy from holding the railway station. The approaches were under water, and all the odds were in favour of the defenders; nevertheless, the Canadians rushed the mouth of a tunnel, captured the machine guns which defended it, and forced their way into the underground refuges and cleared them.

Then came a lull, though the guns were rarely silent, and our airmen constantly dropped bombs on the enemy's billets in the city. A quiet time set in, during which we cleared up the battlefield. In the third week of September it was reported that the body of a Canadian had been found surrounded by fifteen of the enemy, whom he had killed with bombs or the bayonet before he himself had been slain. All alone he had penetrated far into the enemy's lines, and had been cut off. He had refused to surrender, and for the glory of Canada had fought on until he was ringed round with the bodies of his victims. At the end of September Lens was still holding out, though it was stated that Sir Douglas Haig could carry the city any day, if he were prepared to sacrifice the requisite number of men. He preferred, however, to encircle it with gun-fire, and thus force the Germans to withdraw from what was now a death-trap.

Guns that "blaze a trail" for our Infantry.

ry of British heavy howitzers in action. [*Official photograph.*

CHAPTER VI.

THE GERMAN PEACE OFFENSIVE.

BY the month of August 1917 the German Kaiser and his Government knew that they could no longer hope, with their rapidly dwindling forces, to retain the vast territory which they had seized. In the West they were permanently on the defensive; and only in Russia, where the armies of our Allies had lost their discipline, and every soldier did what seemed best in his own eyes, could they cheer the hearts of their people with news of victory. The time had come to try to save something out of the wreckage of their hopes. Germany was ready, and more than ready, to make a peace which would enable her to ride off with some of her ill-gotten spoils.

She believed that the Allies were war weary, and that they would be glad to end the struggle by making terms with her. She hoped that faint-hearted souls in Britain, France, Italy, and Russia would urge upon their governments the duty of putting an end to the war at any price. She was soon to be bitterly undeceived. The great masses of people in all the Allied countries were determined to persevere until the military party in Germany, the enemy of the peace of the world, was overthrown for ever. They knew that if they could endure for another year, until America had time to bring her vast forces into the field, they were bound to win. They were convinced that to falter at the crisis would be to throw away all their hopes of a new world freed from the terrors of the old, and to make a mockery of all the blood and treasure which they had sacrificed through three years of the most deadly struggle ever known to mankind.

In the third week of August we learned that the Pope had made peace proposals to all the fighting nations. He asked them to agree to end the war without either side gaining new territory, and without demanding money payments from each other, except in the case of Belgium and some French and Serbian regions which had been severely damaged. He suggested that the peoples in Alsace-Lorraine and " Unredeemed Italy " should decide for themselves whether they would remain under their present governments or join France or Italy respectively. Further, he suggested that the old kingdom of Poland should be set up anew, and that in exchange for Belgium and the occupied parts of France the Allies should give back the German colonies. Lastly, he pleaded that the nations should disarm and agree to set up a court which should decide all future quarrels.

In July 1915, when the Pope made his first unavailing effort for peace, he declared that he would take no other step in the same direction unless he knew that both sides would listen to his proposals. Before sending out his second appeal he sounded the various governments, and was assured that all of them would carefully consider any terms which he might place before them.

While the Allies were considering their replies, the German Government gave out that the British had offered to give up the German colonies, if Germany, on her part, would give up Belgium. The British Government had, of course, done nothing of the kind. To make a bargain with regard to Belgium was not to be thought of for a moment. In defiance of all right and justice the Germans had seized that country, and now they proposed to barter it for the colonies which they had lost during the war. It was as though a thief who had stolen a watch and had lost a purse should say to a magistrate, " I will give up the watch if you will give me back my purse and let me go free." The magistrate would reply, " You must give up the stolen property, come what may, and be punished for your crime as well." Such was the attitude of the Allies.

Early in September President Wilson published the reply of the United States Government to the Pope's Note. It was a noble document, and it set forth the views of the Allies so clearly that I propose to give you an account of its contents in my own words. The President began by saying that every heart that had not been blunted or hardened by this terrible war must be touched by the moving appeal of his Holiness the

Pope, and must fervently wish to take the path of peace which he pointed out; but it would be folly to take this path if it did not lead to the desired goal.

His Holiness, the President went on to say, proposes that we should return to the position before the war; that all shall be forgiven and forgotten; that the nations shall disarm; that a court shall be set up for the peaceful settlement of disputes; and that the claims of France and Italy to territory in the hands of the enemy, along with the settlement of questions relating to Poland and the Balkan States, shall be decided when war has ceased. No part of this programme can be successfully carried out unless we can be quite sure that Germany will never again offend.

The object of this war is to deliver the free peoples of the world from the menace and actual power of a vast military machine controlled by a government which is a law unto itself; which, having secretly planned to dominate the world, proceeded to carry out the plan without regard to its sacred promises or to any of the old honourable rules of combat; which chose its own time for the war, delivered its blow fiercely and suddenly, stopped at no barrier either of law or mercy, swept a whole continent within the tide of blood—not the blood of soldiers only, but the blood of innocent women and children also, and of the helpless poor—and now stands balked but not defeated, the enemy of four-fifths of the world. This power is not the German people; it is the ruthless master of the German people. It is no business of ours how that great people came under its control, but it is our business to see to it that the history of the rest of the world is no longer left to its handling.

If we make peace in the way his Holiness proposes, we shall permit the German Government to build up its power anew, and to strike again when it has recovered its strength. This means that the Allies will always have to remain in arms against the German people, and will be obliged to leave Russia as the prey of all those secret plots and plans by which the German Government will seek to overturn the revolution. If we agree to make peace, can we trust the German Government to be faithful to its word of honour?

The American people believe that peace should rest upon the rights of peoples, not on the rights of governments; on the rights of peoples, great or small, weak or powerful; and that all should have an equal right to freedom and security and self-government, and to carry on trade with other peoples on fair terms. We must base our peace on the faith of peoples, not merely on the word of an ambitious and intriguing government. We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure, unless it is backed and supported by the will and purpose of the German people themselves. Without such guarantees no nation can depend upon the word of the German Government. Until the people of Germany show themselves ready to pledge their word that they will keep faith, there is no possibility of an enduring peace.

Pope Benedict XV., the Author of the Peace Note.

Such, in substance, was President Wilson's reply. Now let us see what the Kaiser, through the mouth of his Chancellor, had to say in answer to the Pope's proposals. He began with the usual compliments, and then tried to prove that he had always been a great lover of peace, not only for the German people but for the world.

> " In his first speech from the throne, at the opening of the German Reichstag on June 25, 1888, the Kaiser promised that love of the German army and his position towards it should never lead him into the temptation to cut short the benefits of peace, unless war was a necessity forced upon us by an attack on the empire or its allies. . . . The Kaiser has by his acts fulfilled the promise he then made in twenty-six years of happy rule, despite provocations and temptations."

Then the Chancellor went on to say that, in the crisis which led to the present world war, the Kaiser, up to the last moment, strove to bring about peace. After war had broken out, *against his wish and desire*, he was the first to offer peace, and the German people supported him. He was quite willing, after the war, to agree that the nations should limit their armaments by land and sea, and submit matters of dispute to a court of the nations, *in so far as the vital interests of the German people permitted.*

Now, in all this reply there was not a single word to indicate that Germany recognized her crime in plunging Europe into strife, and to show that she wished to make amends for the awful wrong which she had done. No word was said about withdrawing from Belgium, North France, and Serbia, the countries which she had wickedly and wantonly invaded and abused. From first to last there was no promise to restore these countries to their former condition.

Again, the Germans stated what was glaringly untrue and had been exposed a hundred times—namely, that they were the attacked and not the attackers. There was nothing to show that Germany was ready to make peace on terms which the Allies could accept. It was clear that the war must continue until Germany showed signs of repentance, a readiness to restore the countries which she had devastated, and an intention to put the ravaged peoples in their former position, as far as possible.

Strange to say, while the German Chancellor was telling the world how greatly Germany loved peace, and how nobly the Kaiser had maintained it, light was thrown upon his treachery and dishonour during the years before the war. The *Times* told the story of how, on July 5, 1914, there was a conference between the German and Austrian Governments, at which an assault upon Serbia was arranged. No sooner had this fact been made public than we learned how the Kaiser tried to induce the Tsar to make war upon Britain during 1905.

The Russo-Japanese War was raging at the time, and France was the ally of Russia. The Kaiser seized the opportunity, when things were going badly with Russia, to suggest to the Tsar that Germany and France and Russia should form an alliance against Great Britain. He telegraphed to the Tsar, signing himself "Willy," and pointed out that the Japanese and the British Government would probably protest against Germany coaling the Russian ships, and that this would prevent Russian men-of-war from being sent to the East. "Join with me against Great Britain," he said; "but do not tell France until you have done so, then France will be bound to come in."

To this the Tsar, who signed himself "Nicky," replied "that he did not think France would be likely to become the ally of the Power which had beaten and humbled her thirty-five years before." "Willy," however, persuaded "Nicky" that his fears were groundless; and in July 1905 the precious pair signed a secret treaty by which Russia and Germany were to join with France and make war on Britain. As soon as the facts came to the knowledge of the Tsar's Foreign Minister, he pleaded with his master to withdraw from the alliance, and "Nicky" was forced to inform "Willy" that the treaty was null and void, because France would not join in. "Willy" had to agree.

Thereafter he once more posed as a peace-lover, in order to conceal from the "perfidious English" his feelings towards them. In October 1908 he told a representative of the *Daily Telegraph* how grieved and astonished he was that many English newspapers "bade the people of England refuse his proffered hand, because they believed that there was a dagger in the other." How wise these newspapers were we now know only too well.

From these revelations we learned that behind the mask of peace the Kaiser had long been striving to stir up the Powers of Europe against us, and that on July 5, 1914, he and Franz Josef had actually decided on that invasion of Serbia which would be sure to bring about a European war. Yet his Chancellor, in the reply to the Pope's Note, actually dared to say that the Kaiser had always been the friend of peace, and had refrained from war during twenty-six years in spite of provocations and temptations! The Kaiser thus stood revealed not only as false and treacherous, but as an arch-hypocrite as well.

At the very time when the Kaiser was protesting that he was an angel of sweetness and light, the Secret Service in the United States was unravelling a long series of the most dastardly plots against the Allies. The United States representative at Bucharest said that he saw with his own eyes tubes of deadly microbes and boxes of powerful explosives dug up in the garden of the German Legation, and that "still worse things" were hidden in the house. Remember that these poisons and explosives had been in the possession of the German representative while Rumania was neutral. Men stood aghast at all these evidences of treachery.

We learnt also that the German Minister in Buenos Aires had sent through Sweden secret telegrams to his master in Germany informing him of the sailing of ships, and recommending him either to compel Argentine vessels to turn back or to sink them without leaving any trace. All this time, you must remember, the Argentine Republic was at peace with Germany. The result was that the German representative was ordered to withdraw, and the Argentine broke off relations with Germany. So frequently, during the month of September, were German plots brought to light, that *Punch* said further exposures would only be published every other day, "owing to paper shortage!"

From what you have read in this chapter you can clearly understand why the Allies refused to talk peace when no peace was possible. Germany offered nothing; but even if the Pope had made offers on her behalf, no nation could possibly put faith in any pledge which she might give, because the rulers of Germany had shown that they were devoid of all sense of honour, and their wicked plots on both sides of the Atlantic had proved clearly that they were incapable of distinguishing right from wrong. Until the Central Powers were ready to withdraw from the territories which they had conquered, were ready to repair the ravages which they had committed, and to give genuine guarantees that they would never again offend, the war, with all its horror and suffering, must go on. There could be no enduring peace on earth until Germany had been purged of the evil spirit that had entered into her.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE GULF OF RIGA.

IN Chapter XLI. of our seventh volume I told you how discipline broke down in the Russian army, and how Kerensky strove, valiantly but vainly, to weed out the evil growths which had been implanted in the minds of the soldiers by German agents. Let me for a few moments recall the events which took place on the Russian front between June and September 1917. You will remember that, on 30th June, Brussilov began a furious attack in Galicia, which must have come as a very disagreeable surprise to the German people, who imagined that the Russians had been " counted out," and need not again be feared.

Brussilov hit hard, and, according to the enemy, he had 600,000 men with which to strike his blow. He fiercely bombarded the Austro-German positions, carried certain points by assault, and, after severe fighting, drove the enemy back all along the Galician line. In the meantime Korniloff's Eighth Army, further to the south, hunted the Austro-Germans from the field, and on 11th July reached the western bank of the Lomnica. The armies which were thought to be honeycombed with sedition, and to be no longer fit to take the field, surprised the world by their dash and gallantry, and everywhere men believed that the hour had arrived when Russia would retrieve her fallen fortunes.

When, however, the German reserves came into play on 19th July, and began a counter-offensive, the hope vanished. Three enemy corps broke the Russian lines, and the Eleventh Army, which had been gravely corrupted by German lies and German gold, gave way. The right of the Seventh Russian

Army was thus uncovered, and it also refused to stand. By 23rd July the Russians were in full retreat along the whole front, and the enemy was in rapid pursuit all the way from the Sereth to the wooded Carpathians. Stanislau and Tarnopol fell before the month was out, and on 1st August the enemy occupied Czernovitz. Eastern Galicia and Bukovina were almost entirely lost to the Russians.

While despair had succeeded hope in the south, the Germans determined to capture Riga, which had defied them so long. They needed Riga very badly, partly because it was a great port which would enable them to supply their front from the sea, partly because the city would afford them winter quarters, and partly because, while the Russians held the bridgeheads of the Dvina, they could always threaten the German line. Hindenburg had failed to capture the city in the autumn of 1915 ; he was now determined to have it.

The Twelfth Russian Army, which was defending Riga, lay along the Lower Dvina,* which in this part of its course is 300 yards broad. The position was strongly fortified, and seemed to be impregnable. Indeed, the commander of the army confidently declared that his defences were storm-proof, and that he had more men to hold them than he needed. But, unhappily, these men had been corrupted ; they had lost their old steadiness, and their discipline was very loose. They had made friends with the enemy in the opposite trenches, and swarms of German agents had gone to and fro among them, persuading them to lay down their arms and trust the Kaiser.

According to their custom, the Germans made careful preparations for their attack. They drew off men and guns from other parts of the front, and collected an army along the railway running through Mitau to Jacobstadt. On 20th August the Russian outposts were driven in, and the Russian general ordered his outlying detachments to fall back on the bridgeheads opposite to Riga and the town of Uxkull, some fifteen miles to the south-east. He thought that in these fortified positions they would be able to prevent the enemy from crossing the river. The Germans, however, had brought up a vast number of guns, and they now opened a bombardment fiercer than any which the Russians had ever before

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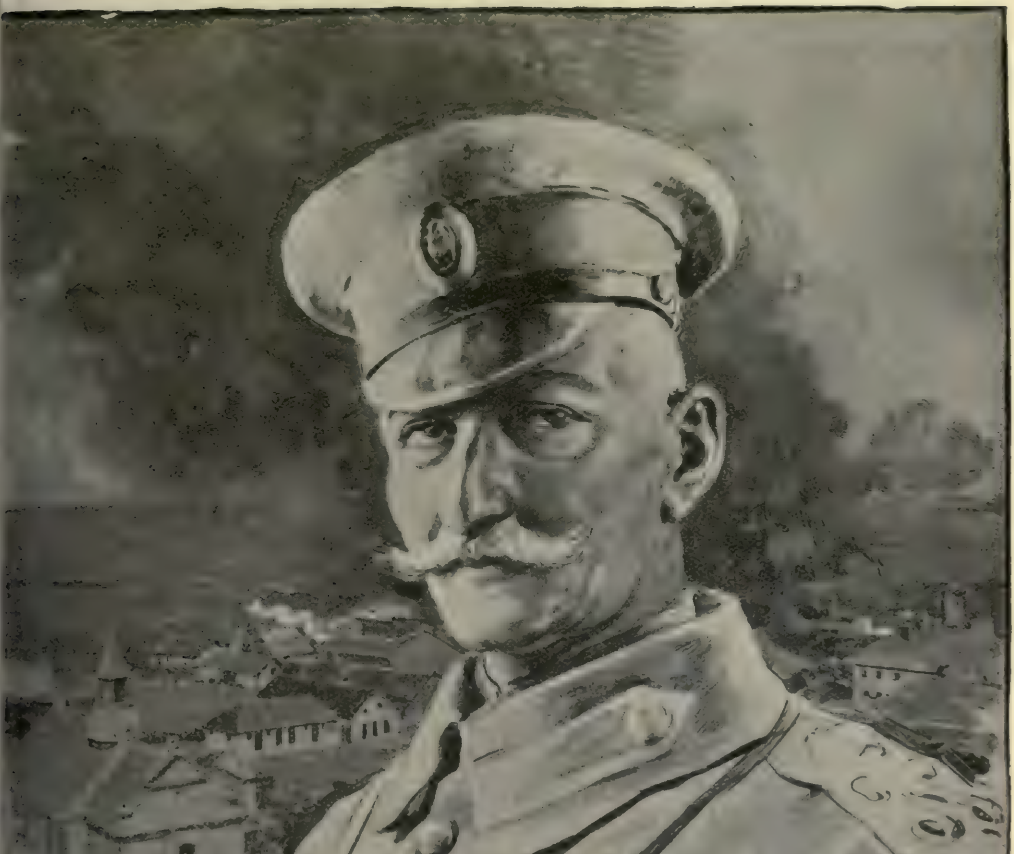
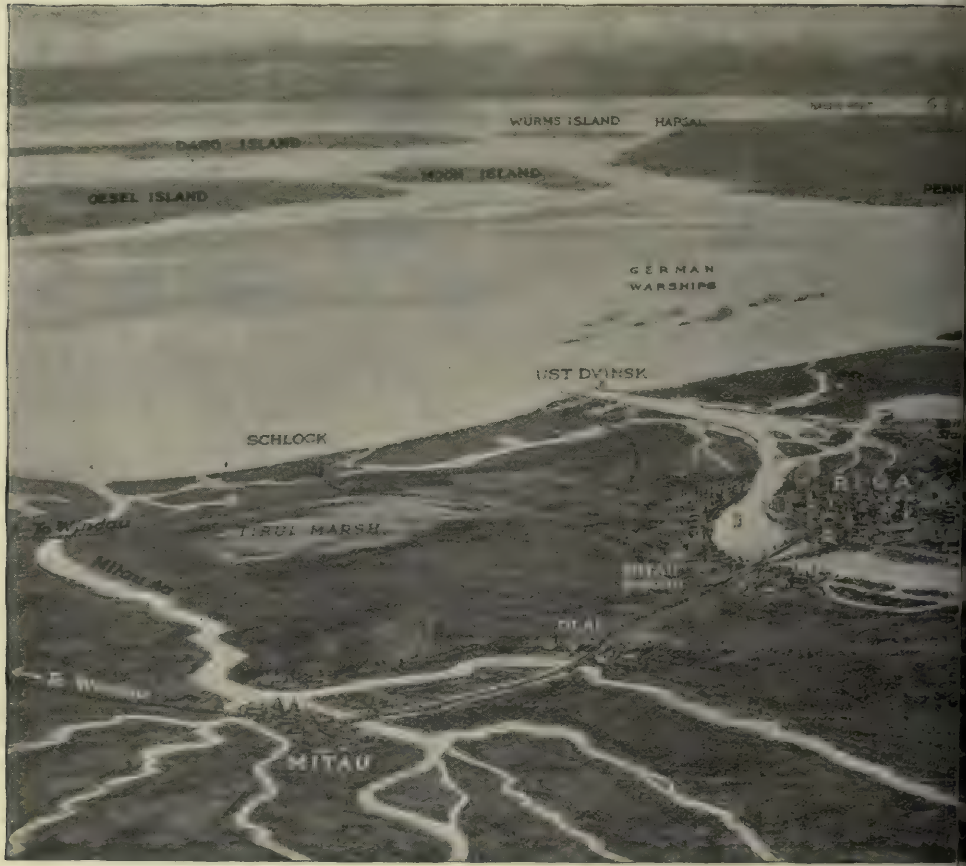
* See panoramic map, pp. 84–85.



General Alexei Alexievich Brussilov.

(*From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.*)

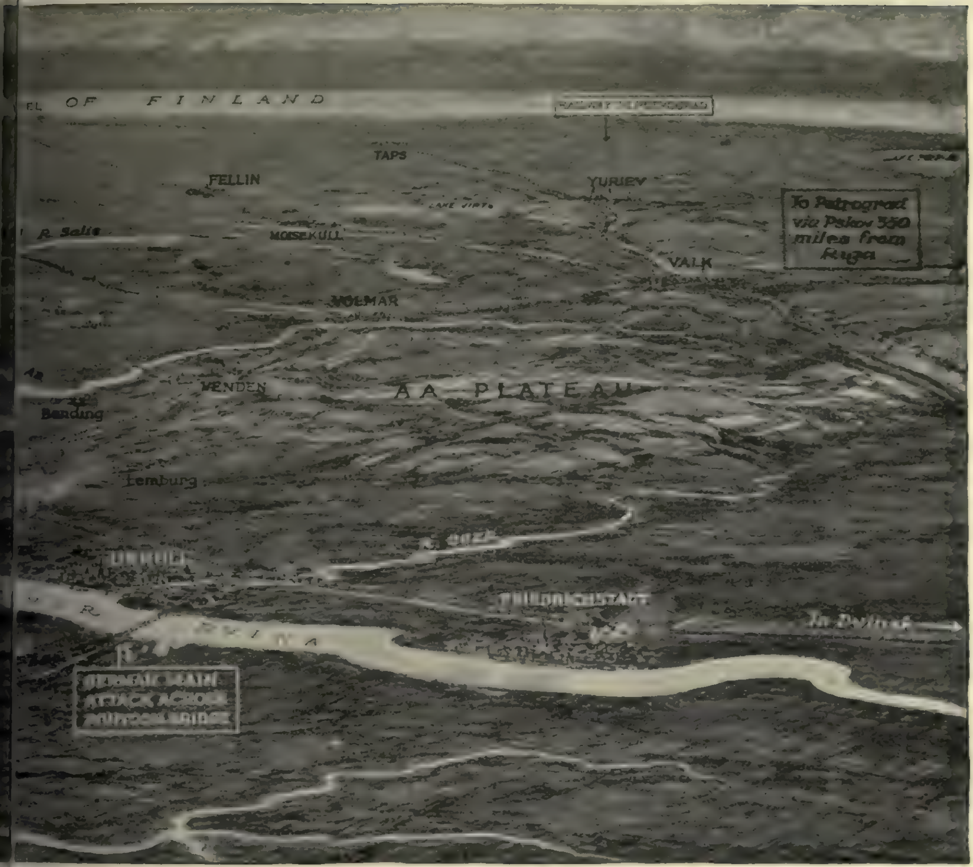
General Brussilov, the hero of the great Russian advance described in this chapter, was appointed generalissimo of Russian forces in place of General Alexeiev, who failed to work satisfactorily with the Provisional Government. Later on he resigned because the Government would not withdraw Order No. 1, and was succeeded by Korniloff.


WURMS ISLAND
HAPSAL
DAGO ISLAND
MOON ISLAND
OESEL ISLAND
PERN
GERMAN WARSHIPS
UST DVINSK
SCHLOCK
To Windau
TIRUL MARSH
Mitau Aa
RIGA
OLAI
MITAU

Panorama of the Russian Baltic Provinces and of Livonia

This view is taken from a point behind and above Mitau, the German headquarters or of islands which shuts it off from the Baltic. In the foreground is the Dvina, and beyo it of Valta, from which two lines lead to Petrograd. Much of the country between the Dvina and It is ill provided with roads and railways.

experienced. At five in the morning of 1st September waves of poison gas, and shells, which gave forth choking fumes, were directed against the Russians, and under this cloud of death the Germans threw pontoons across the Dvina and crossed over the river. At the fortified bridgehead of Uxkull the Russians refused to fight, and as a consequence the Germans crossed almost unmolested. By so doing they turned the eastern defences of Riga, and thus brought about its downfall.


OF FINLAND
TAPS
FELLIN
YURIEV
LAKE VIRTS
To Petrograd via Pskov 350 miles from Riga
R. Salis
MOISEKULL
VALK
WOLMAR
Aa
WENDEN
AA PLATEAU
Banding
Lemburg
R. OGER
UXKULL
FRIEDRICHSTADT
To Dvinsk
R. DVINA
GERMAN MAIN ATTACK ACROSS PONTOON BRIDGE

honia, the country beyond Riga and the Lower Dvina.

attack on Riga. To the left is seen the almost land-locked Gulf of Riga, with the group difficult country of the Aa Plateau. Beyond the plateau is the important railway junction capital is hilly, with marshy valleys and patches of woodland dotted with shallow lakes.

By midday they had gained a footing on the right bank of the river.

The following is the German account of the fall of the city :—

> "After two days' fighting, the army, under the leadership of General von Hutier, yesterday took Riga, which they entered from the west and south-east, and found to be on fire in several places. Our tried and trusty warriors everywhere broke down the Russian resistance, and in an eager forward thrust overcame every obstacle presented by the woods and marshes.

The Russians hurriedly abandoned the extensive bridgehead west of Riga, and our divisions now stood before the mouth of the Dvina. Dense masses of Russian troops are crowding the roads from Riga, and are moving in a north-easterly direction both by day and night. South of the road leading from Riga to Pskov strong Russian forces were thrown against our troops in the desperate and costly endeavour to cover the withdrawal of the defeated Twelfth Army. In a bitter struggle they were overcome by our assault, and the main road has been reached at several points by our divisions. The Battle of Riga is another glorious page in the history of the German army."

After crossing the Dvina and seizing Riga, the German army, in fanlike formation, pushed on eastward for nearly forty miles. Then they relaxed the pursuit, and the Russians began to rally. They turned on their pursuers, and a stubborn battle was fought which forced the Germans to fall back to the line which they were still holding at the close of October.

We need not be surprised at Germany's rapid and easy victory. While some Russian regiments fought well, others retreated in a body. They flung over their commanders, and, as you know, armies without commanders are but armed mobs. All the trouble began when the revolutionary leaders passed what is known as Order No. 1, which took the command out of the hands of officers and transferred it to the men. Committees were set up in each regiment, and the officers were required to take their orders from these committees. A moment's thought will show you how utterly impossible it is for a campaign to be fought and won in such circumstances. Prompt, quick, unquestioning obedience is the first virtue of the soldier.

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do—and die."

Order No. 1 was the rock upon which Russia split. The generals refused to hold their mockeries of command until this order was withdrawn; and when the Government refused to do so, many of those who had proved their genius on the battlefield were lost to Russia.

Discipline is the very life-blood of an army; once it disappears an army is a lifeless, bloodless thing, the prey of the disciplined enemy. The Russians in their newly-found freedom forgot this vital truth. They might have learned from the example of their Allies—all free peoples—who had freely given up their right to order their own movements that they might be enabled to beat down the common foe of all freedom. Unhappily, the peasants, who form the bulk of Russian soldiers, were ignorant men, who had long been held in bondage. When the bonds of authority were loosened, they thought that, in the name of freedom, each man could do what seemed best in his own eyes. They did not understand that the finest fruit of freedom is a willingness to submit to control so that a great end may be attained. In the slave country of Germany men are driven into obedience by physical force ; in a free country they choose to place themselves under discipline because they know that it is the only way by which they can defend that liberty which is dearer to them than life itself.

The loss of Riga imperilled Petrograd, and it was thought that before long the Germans would begin their march on the Russian capital, some three hundred miles away as the aeroplane flies. General Korniloff, whom you will remember as the successful general of the July advance, had succeeded Brussilov as commander-in-chief. He came to the conclusion that there was no hope for Russia until the death penalty was re-introduced into the army for cowards and traitors. He assumed the post of supreme commander-in-chief, and demanded certain conditions from the Government. While the members talked and delayed, he began to march on Petrograd at the head of his faithful Cossacks. He declared that he was not moved by ambition, but by the hope of saving Russia from the shame and ruin of German slavery. He had no desire to set up the old form of government again, but simply to bring order out of chaos, and to make the Russian armies a strong fighting force as of old.

For a brief space it seemed that Korniloff would be able to make himself dictator of Russia. Kerensky, however, was too strong and too clever for him. The rebellion was brought to naught without bloodshed, thanks partly to the firm and skilful way in which Kerensky dealt with the situation, and partly because the Soviet, believing that Korniloff meant to set up the Tsar upon his throne once more, rallied round the Premier. As soon as the danger had passed, Kerensky proclaimed Russia a republic, assumed supreme command of the army, secured the services of Alexeiev as Chief of the Staff and brought back Ruzsky and other generals, and strove once more to restore order and discipline amongst the officers who had joined Korniloff's rebellion. Finally, he formed a non-party War Council of five members, and made General Verkhovsky his War Minister. Before the Revolution Verkhovsky was a professor at the Staff College. He was promoted to be general in the spring of 1917, when he was appointed Governor of Moscow.

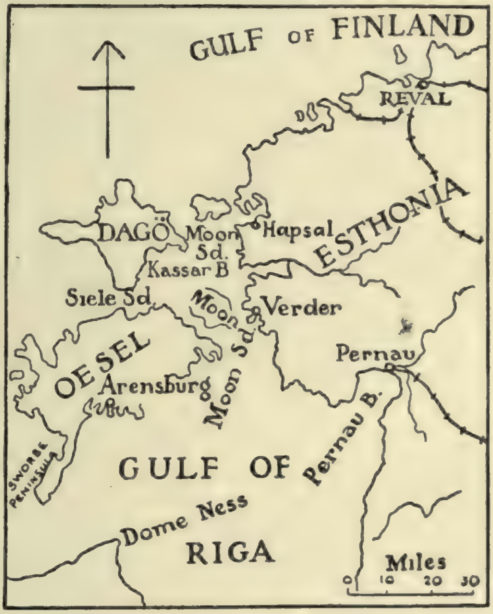
Korniloff had failed; but his rebellion had a good effect, for it strengthened Kerensky's hands, and enabled him to set up a stronger Government and begin the work of reforming the army. Unhappily he did not dare to get rid of the regimental committees which had worked such havoc with the discipline of the troops. We shall see in later pages that the canker had so deeply eaten into the army as to render it practically useless.

The Germans had not yet finished their Russian campaign. They now proposed to secure their gains by winning the command of the Gulf of Riga. If you look at the map, you will see that the gulf is U-shaped, and is about eighty miles across at its widest part. It is almost cut off from the Baltic Sea by two large islands, Oesel and Dagö. Oesel is about forty-five miles long from north-east to south-west, and has an area of about one thousand square miles. Its surface is undulating, the hills are low, and there is much marshy and well-wooded ground through which sluggish streams make their way to the sea. At the southern end is the knife-shaped Sworbe Peninsula, and between it and the mainland is a navigable channel, protected by forts on the peninsula. At the north-eastern end of Oesel is Möön Island, which is joined to the larger island by a mole. Another channel, between Möön Island and the Verder Peninsula on the mainland, gives access to the gulf. The only town of the island is Arensburg, on the south-east coast.

To the north of Oesel, and separated from it by Siele Sound and Kassar Bay, lies the island of Dagö, which is, roughly, starlike in shape, and has an area of about 370 square miles. Its coast is rugged, and, like Oesel, it consists mainly of woods and swamps. The only fertile soil is in the south and south-west. Between Dagö and the mainland lies Möön Sound.

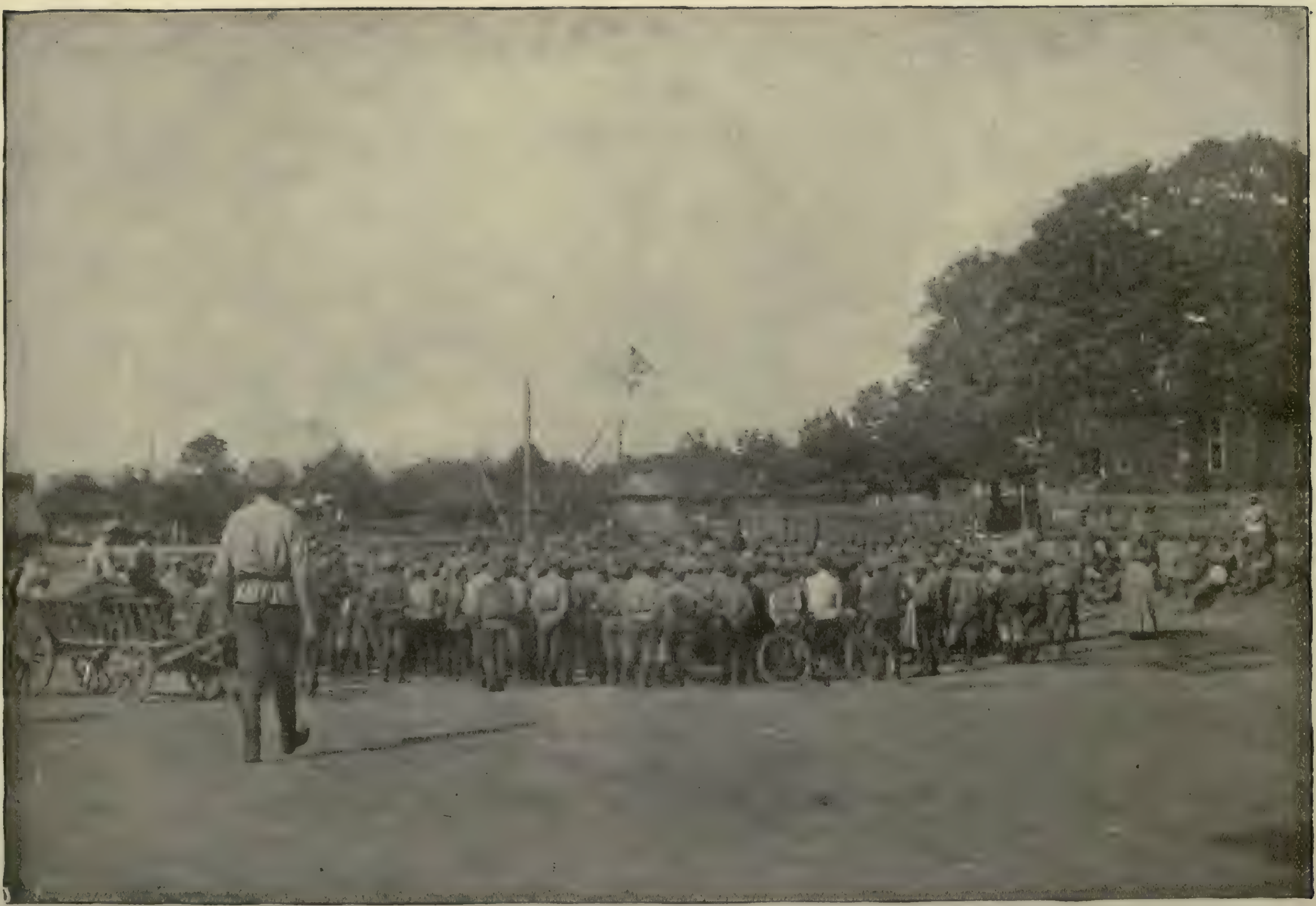
The new campaign opened on 21st September, when the Germans broke through the Russian positions north-west of Jacobstadt and captured the strong bridgehead which General

Ruzsky had constructed two years previously on the left bank of the river. The Russians holding the bridgehead were taken by surprise, and made little or no resistance. They retired in haste, leaving behind them many prisoners, fifty-five guns, and much war booty. Jacobstadt was occupied, and the Germans were gratified to find within it large stores of provisions and comfortable quarters for their troops. Most observers now thought that a march on Petrograd would soon begin, and all were surprised when news arrived that a landing had been made on the islands in the Gulf of Riga.



On 12th October a fleet of sixty German warships, accompanied by thirty mine-sweepers and a number of transports laden with soldiers, appeared off the island of Oesel. The mine-sweepers at once began work, and in the unexplained absence of the Russian fleet were not interfered with. When they had cleared away the mines the warships approached within range of the shore, and smashed the batteries on the west coast of the island. At the same time other ships destroyed the forts on both sides of the Siele Sound and the Sworbe Peninsula. As soon as the naval guns had done their work troops were landed by means of flat-bottomed sloops towed by motor boats. The troops were set on shore very rapidly. The Russians in the north part of the island made no attempt to repel the invaders, but hurried off to Möön Island, which they reached by way of the mole. Meanwhile a German squadron entered the gulf by the southern channel, and sailed northward to Möön Island, where it assisted the land forces.

Arensburg, the capital, was occupied on the evening of the



Discussion behind the Lines: Russian Soldiers listening to a Delegate speaking.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

13th, and the Russians holding the Sworbe Peninsula found themselves cut off. They held out for three days, and then surrendered. Thus the whole island passed into the hands of the enemy. The German commander reported that he had captured 10,000 men, fifty guns, and much war material. On the 18th the Germans seized Möön Island, and 5,000 Russians who were cooped up on it surrendered. Next day a landing was made on the island of Dagö, and the dismal story of Oesel was repeated. By the 20th the whole island had been conquered, and, what is more, German troops had gained a footing on the Verder Peninsula of the mainland.

You are probably surprised to discover that the Russian fleet was absent when the Germans landed on the island of Oesel. The scouting was bad, and its admirals were unaware of what was taking place. Only on the morning of the 13th, when the shore batteries had been battered down by the enemy Dreadnoughts and German troops had made good their footing on the island, did a squadron of Russian warships appear. Accompanied by the *Slava* and another battleship, the squadron steamed into the eastern part of Möön Island, preceded by torpedo boats.

At 9.30 the enemy opened fire, and the flagship was attacked unsuccessfully by an enemy submarine. An hour later the Russian ships replied; but as they were old-type vessels with out-of-date guns, they did not greatly trouble the Germans. By noon reinforcements of enemy warships came up, and then it was clear that if the Russians did not retire with all speed their destruction would be certain. The signal was made, and the vessels of our ally turned towards the north, and retired fighting. The *Slava*, the last vessel in the line, was struck again and again below the water-line, and finally went down by the head at the entrance to the Möön Channel. Later on a large destroyer was sunk.

During this part of the battle several Russian gunboats and destroyers which were on the inner part of Möön Sound managed to hold their own for a time. While the fighting was going on the enemy shelled the mole between Oesel and Möön, and launched a great air attack. Bombs were dropped on the ships from aeroplanes, and on the evening of the 16th several Zeppelins came to their assistance. On the 19th the Russian naval forces finally withdrew, and the Gulf of Riga remained in unmolested possession of the enemy.

You will be interested to learn that British submarines took part in this battle. One of them met an enemy squadron of four Dreadnoughts, several cruisers and destroyers, and fired two torpedoes at the leading ship. The submarine, however, was so heavily bombed by seaplanes and so fiercely assailed by gun-fire that it had to submerge, and therefore was unable to see the result of its torpedo attack. When it raised its periscope again, clouds of smoke were observed at a distance, and destroyers were seen escorting transports. One of the destroyers made for the submarine, which, before seeking safety under the waves, discharged a torpedo which sank a transport.

So ends the story of how the Russians lost the Gulf of Riga. The Germans had made a daring adventure, and their success turned the whole Russian position on the Dvina and opened the coast road to Petrograd. Many observers thought that the object of the Germans in capturing the islands was to secure a good position from which they could advance on the capital in the following spring. Soon, however, the real meaning of the operation became clear. A great assault was about to be made on the Italians, who were pushing forward on the Carso, and were proving more than a match for the Austrians. The attack on the islands in the Baltic Sea was intended to draw off the attention of the Allies from the preparations which the Germans were making on the borders of North Italy. Six days after they won the Gulf of Riga the blow fell, and Italy suffered a disaster which seemed to portend her ruin.

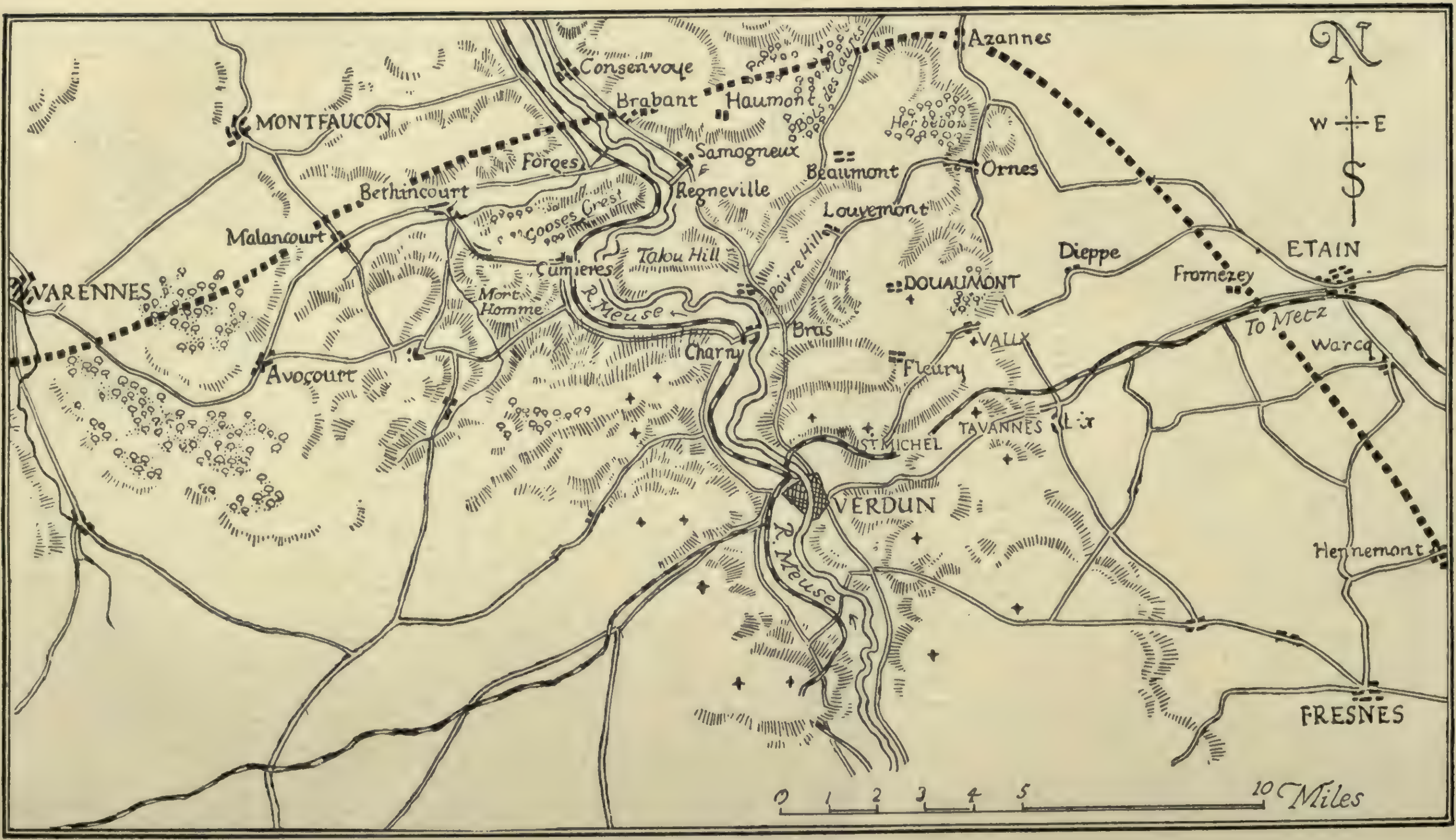
CHAPTER VIII.

VERDUN ONCE MORE.

BEFORE I tell you the story of the Italian disaster, to which I referred at the close of the previous chapter, I must give you a brief account of two very successful offensives made by our gallant Allies the French. For the first of them we must go back to 20th August, and once more revisit those blood-sodden hills and vales on which French valour and steadfastness have won their proudest laurels. We must return to the battlefield of Verdun.

In Chapter XXVII. of our sixth volume I told you how the French made a great leap forward, and won back Vaux, Douaumont, Pepper Hill, and other positions which will be ever memorable in the history of the war. By doing so they removed all danger from Verdun, "the inviolable city." I will now tell you very briefly how a further advance was made, and how the Germans were again smitten hip and thigh.

On Monday, 20th August, three corps of the Second French Army were brought up to attack the twelve-mile front extending from Avocourt to the north of Bezonvaux. One corps was to attack on the left bank of the Meuse, and the other two on the right bank. As usual, the German front was fiercely and continuously bombarded. For nine days before the infantry were sent forward a vast number of heavy guns never ceased to give tongue. They not only destroyed the German positions, but engaged the enemy's batteries with such effect that the German gunners could not keep up a fire sufficient to prevent the French troops from advancing. When, on the morning of the 20th, the order was given to "go over the top," the infantry simply walked into the enemy's positions. So


N
W
E
S
Azannes
Consenvoye
Brabant
Haumont
Bois des Caures
Herbebois
MONTFAUCON
Samogneux
Beaumont
Ornes
Forges
Regneville
Bethincourt
Gooses Crest
Louvemont
Malancourt
Talou Hill
Poivre Hill
Dieppe
ETAIN
Fromezey
Cumieres
DOUAUMONT
VARENNES
Mort Homme
R. Meuse
Bras
To Metz
Warcq
VAUX
Charny
Fleury
Avocourt
TAVANNES
ST MICHEL
VERDUN
Hennemont
R. Meuse
FRESNES
0
1
2
3
4
5
10 Miles

Map of the Verdun Salient.

terrible had been the shelling that the Germans were obliged to withdraw their men to dug-outs in the rear.

On the left bank of the river Avocourt Wood was cleared, the Dead Man was captured, and Crow's Wood and Cumières Wood were entered. On the right bank the troops went over Talon Hill, while further to the right they also made a good advance. Of course the Germans counter-attacked, but with no success; and as a result of the day's fighting 5,000 prisoners were taken. Next day on the left bank the Goose Crest and the village of Regneville were captured; while on the right the village of Samogneux was seized.

Three days later the battle was resumed, and the French, having captured that famous Hill 304, rushed down its northern slopes, and reached the Forges Brook. By evening there were over 8,000 prisoners in the cages, and twenty-four guns and 200 machine guns had been captured. So the advance continued until 8th September, when the French had reached a position from which they could look down on Beaumont and Ornes.

I have summed up the advance in a very few words; but because my account is brief you must not imagine that the victory was unimportant. It was a feather in the cap of our gallant Allies. In an order of the day General Pétain congratulated his troops in the following words: "In a single bound you have passed over the historic ground where so many of your comrades during long months resisted the enemy inch by inch in his proud advance on Verdun." The enemy knew that the attack was to be made, and had prepared to receive it. Nevertheless they were beaten out of their trenches by superior French gunnery, and were pushed back from point to point by better men than themselves.

Never has the tide of battle ebbed and flowed in such a remarkable fashion as on the bare uplands of Verdun. Read the story as it is told in former pages of this work, and try to realize the terrible trials of the French, whose courage never failed them, even when the last hope seemed to have vanished. They were beaten back almost to the walls of the city, but they fought on, and gradually recovered almost all the ground that they had lost. We are not accustomed to think of the French as a dogged race, but the history of the Verdun struggle shows us plainly that perseverance is one of their national virtues.

We British consider that to hold fast, no matter what may befall, is the highest type of courage. We can, therefore, appreciate the French achievement at its full value.

* * * * * * *

Before I conclude this account let me tell you how a French boy of nineteen, Private Lemoine, won the Legion of Honour for his gallantry during the battles described in this chapter. During an enemy counter-attack Lemoine collected a goodly number of bombs, and running ahead of his fellows leaped into a likely shell-hole and there dug himself in. The Germans soon discovered that before they could recover the trench which they had lost they must first drive Lemoine out of his shell-hole. This was more easily said than done. Again and again they advanced upon him; but his aim was so sure that the ground in front of his position was strewn with German dead.

When the enemy drew off the brave lad made his way back to his friends, and finding that communication had been cut off between the trench which they occupied and the main position, volunteered to act as "runner." To pass through the enemy's barrage was almost certain death; but fate was kind, and the lad safely delivered his message to the commandant in the rear. For these exploits he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and his comrades dubbed him "the Benjamin of the French army."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE OF MALMAISON.

I AM sure that you have not forgotten the Ladies' Road, and the wonderful tenacity with which the French fought their way up to the famous highway, and clung on to it, despite fierce attacks and furious cannonading.* On the anniversary of that October day in the year 1916 when the French made the first of the advances which drove the Germans back to the north of Verdun, they won a dashing victory on the Ladies' Road. As this success was one of the most brilliant in the annals of the French army, I must describe it in some detail.

Look at the panoramic map on the next page and find Craonne. You will remember that to the west of Craonne the Germans had been thrust from the road into the valley of the Ailette. Nevertheless, until the 23rd October they still maintained a footing on the ridge still further to the west. It was a shaky footing ; but while they held any part of the high ground the French could not take advantage of their gains. For this reason the Germans clung desperately to their foothold. In this part of the line there are many chalk caverns which had been in their possession ever since September 1914, when von Kluck established himself on the Aisne ridge. These caverns, from which plaster of Paris is obtained in times of peace, had been connected by galleries, and were used as storehouses and quarters for the six divisions defending the ridge.

Look again at the map and find Laffaux.† You notice that from this village a road runs northward across the Ailette to Laon, past the village of Chavignon.‡ Laffaux Mill stands right on top of the ridge. The French had pushed forward as far as

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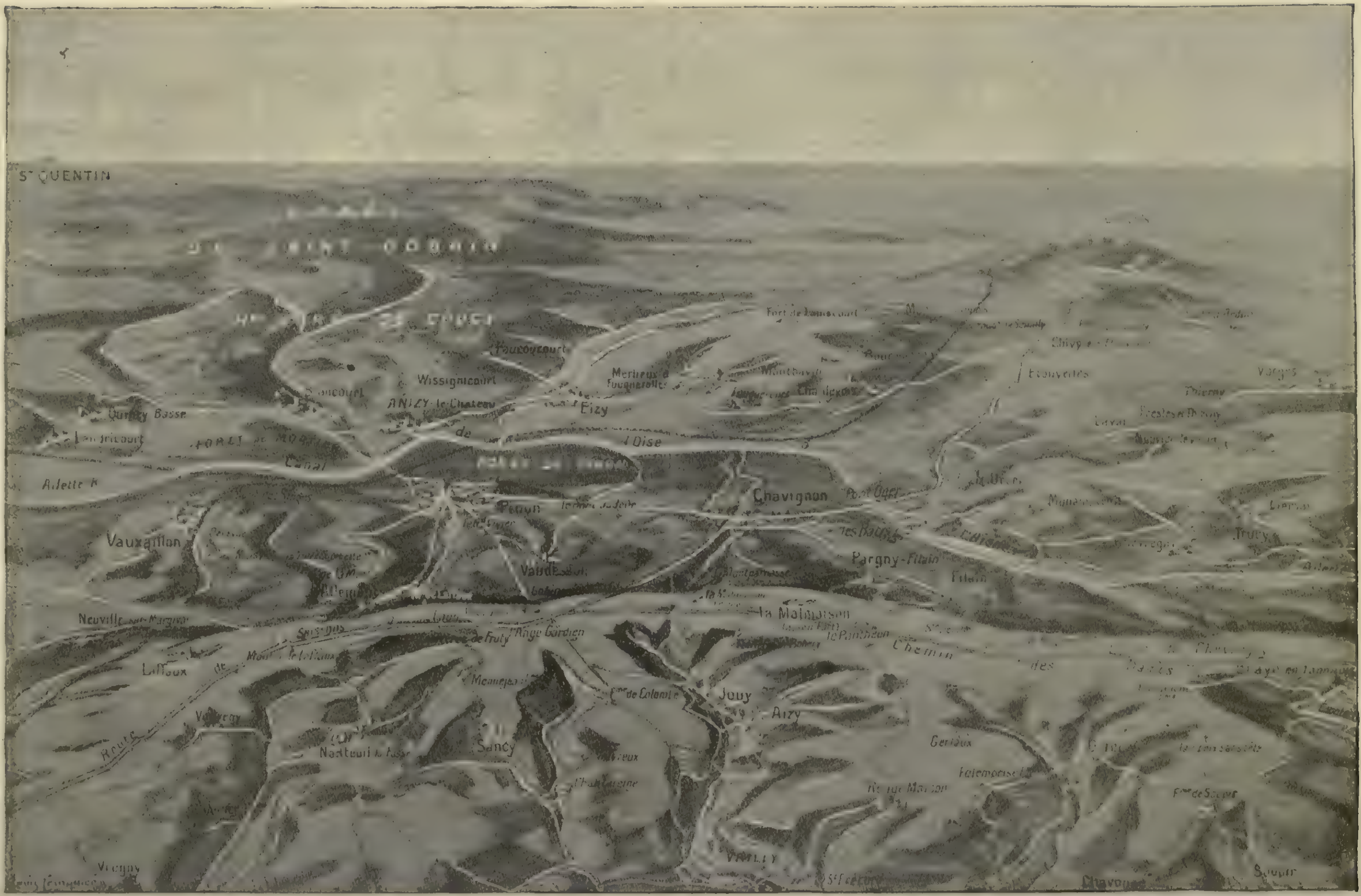
* See Chap. XXVII., Vol. VII. † *Laf-foe.* ‡ *Sha-vee-nyon.*


S^T QUENTIN
Wissignicourt
Faucoucourt
Anizy-le-Chateau
Eizy
Merlieux et Fouquerolles
Canal
de
l'Oise
Ailette R.
Quincy Basse
Vauxaillon
Pinon
Chavignon
Pont Oger
les Bruyères
Pargny-Filain
Filain
Vaudesson
Neuville-sur-Margival
Laffaux
Moulin de Laffaux
Ange Gardien
la Malmaison
le Panthéon
Chemin
des
Dames
Jouy
Aizy
Sancy
Nanteuil-la-Fosse
Vregny
Vailly
Chavonne
Soupir
Chivy
Étouvelles
Vorges
Trucy
Laval
Monthenault
Chamouille
Ostel
Fort de Malmaison
Route
Fort de Condé
Fort de Laniscourt
Cerny

Panoramic View of the Scene of the Battle of Malmaison.

(By permission of L'Illustration.)

the summit of the rise, but they had been held up by a triangular-shaped piece of plateau, honeycombed in all directions by the caves and galleries which I have mentioned. As the Germans had been in possession of this small plateau for three years, you may be sure that they had done everything in their power to make it impregnable. Hidden in the caves and galleries were 100,000 of their best troops. Their general was quite certain that he could never be driven out. He was not, however, content to let his men sit down and grow lazy by inaction. In order to keep them in practice he constantly made counter-attacks.

Until the Allies were better provided with guns and shells than the enemy, it was impossible to drive the Germans out of this formidable stronghold. When, however, General Pétain decided on 23rd October to make a bold bid for it, he was able to bring up a vast number of heavy guns. The French, you must remember, are the best artillerymen in the world. Our own shooting was by this time very good ; but in handling artillery so as to produce the most deadly results the French gunners have no masters.

Their first business was to smash the caves in such a way as to choke up the entrances with the wreckage. For days on end the heavy pieces hurled 16-inch shells filled with high explosives against the roofs of the chalk workings. The Germans supposed themselves to be quite secure against the guns. Now they saw their shelters being dashed to fragments before their eyes. The strain on them was terrible, and many men lost their nerve altogether as explosion after explosion blew in their shelters and blocked up the exits. They could not retire, nor could reinforcements be brought up, for the lighter French guns made all the approaches and cross-ways terribly "unhealthy." The consequence was that they were completely cut off.

When the caves and galleries had been utterly ruined the infantry were let loose. On the map you will see, to the north of Laffaux, the village of Allemant.* The houses of the village had long since been destroyed by French shells ; but in the cellars the Germans were very strongly posted. To the east of Allemant you will see Malmaison Fort, which was originally built to command the road to Laon. On the other side of the road you will observe Vaudesson,* which was another old fort erected for the same purpose. These forts had long been in ruin, but the Germans had turned them into concrete strongholds, each of which contained a regiment as garrison. As the 1st Grenadiers of the Prussian Guard held these forts, you can understand how important the Germans considered them. Then, further on in the valley of the Ailette, the Germans had fortified the village of Chavignon. The French infantry were called upon to carry these very strong points, and not only did they capture them, but they swept the whole three-cornered plateau clear. Such a task might well have daunted even the bravest of men ; it did not daunt the French.

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* *Al-mang.*

With that glorious dash for which they are famous, they went forward in fog and rain, and carried all before them for a distance of two and a half miles. The caverns in which the Germans trusted proved to be death-traps. Not a tenth of the 100,000 men in them got away ; a large number perished in the bombardment, and before the operations were over 11,000 prisoners were in French hands. Some 100 guns were captured, and a great store of booty was taken.

The French followed up their success very rapidly. By the 24th they were a mile north of Chavignon, and their line, instead of running south-east to Allemant, struck due west to meet the Soissons-Laon railway. Next day the Germans retreated behind the Oise-Aisne Canal. As they retired they cut down the fruit trees, burned the farmsteads, and filled up the wells, as they had done when they withdrew during the Somme battle.

The French were overjoyed, as they had every right to be. Their rapid and striking success won great praise, and the Allies rejoiced with them. But before they had time to realize that the enemy had again been forced to retreat, the great German-Austrian thrust at the Upper Isonzo had begun, and the armies of Italy were in dire peril.

* *Vo-dess-ong.*

CHAPTER X.

THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE.—I.

ONCE more I turn to the inspiring task of recording the names and deeds of those who, by outstanding deeds of courage and self-sacrifice, won the proudest decoration that a soldier can wear. Between the beginning of August and the end of October 1917 no fewer than forty-three, officers and men, were awarded the Victoria Cross. I have made it a practice in these pages to describe the feat or feats of heroism of all those who were so distinguished, not merely for the sake of telling a large number of stirring stories, but in order that you may honour these bravest of the brave in your hearts, and be inspired to dare and die, if need be, for your country in the same glorious spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. The first name on my list is that of

CAPTAIN ROBERT CUTHBERT GRIEVE, Australian Infantry.

During an attack on an enemy position, Captain Grieve's battalion was very heavily assailed by artillery and machine-gun fire. All his brother-officers fell wounded, and his own company suffered severely. Hidden machine guns were scattering death broadcast, and no advance was possible until they were discovered and put out of action. Luckily the gallant captain " spotted " the position of the two guns that were doing most of the mischief. Filling his pockets with bombs, he crept forward all alone, and, utterly careless of his own life, managed to get within reach of the gunners. He threw his bombs with deadly aim, and killed the crews of both guns; then when the way was clear, he rallied the remnants of his company, and, leading them forward, captured the position. Not until the few surviving Germans were in full flight did he fall wounded. By his contempt for danger and his splendid coolness under fire he turned what looked like defeat into victory. I think you will agree that his cross was nobly won.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT JOHN MANSON CRAIG, Royal Scottish Fusiliers.

Lieutenant Craig was a Perthshire boy, who received his education at Morrison's Academy, Crieff. He went straight from school to the army, joining the Cameronians as a private. He fought at Loos, and shortly afterwards returned home to train for a commission. When he received his appointment as second-lieutenant he was transferred to the Royal Scottish Fusiliers. He was only twenty-one years of age when he performed the feat which added his name to the proud roll of British heroes. Three times previously he had distinguished himself by his splendid courage and resource.

A few of our men were holding an advanced post, when suddenly large numbers of the enemy rushed upon them, and the position was lost. Lieutenant Craig immediately organized a rescue party, and succeeded in winning back the lost trenches. He then set his men to work removing the dead and wounded. While they were so engaged the enemy snipers and machine gunners kept up an incessant fire. A non-commissioned officer out in the open fell wounded, and the doctor who went to his assistance was also hit. Lieutenant Craig went out in face of the fire, and managed to get the N.C.O. under cover. He then returned for the doctor, and while removing him to shelter was himself wounded. Nevertheless, he managed to rescue the doctor, and, when he was in a safe position, " carried on " with untiring zeal. The enemy now signalled to their guns, and a storm of shrapnel and high-explosive shells began to fall amongst his men. At once he began scooping cover for his wounded, and by his exertions was able to save many lives. Remember that all this was done in broad daylight, with the enemy in sight and at close range.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT JOHN SPENCER DUNVILLE, Dragoons.

This gallant officer was an old Etonian, who received his commission in September 1914. He belonged to a family famous in the world of sport. His father, Flight-Commander John Dunville, R.N.A.S., was Master of the Cambridge Drag Hounds in his college days, and both he and his wife won renown as daring aeronauts. Flight-Commander Dunville owned the balloon (Banshee I.) which took part in the

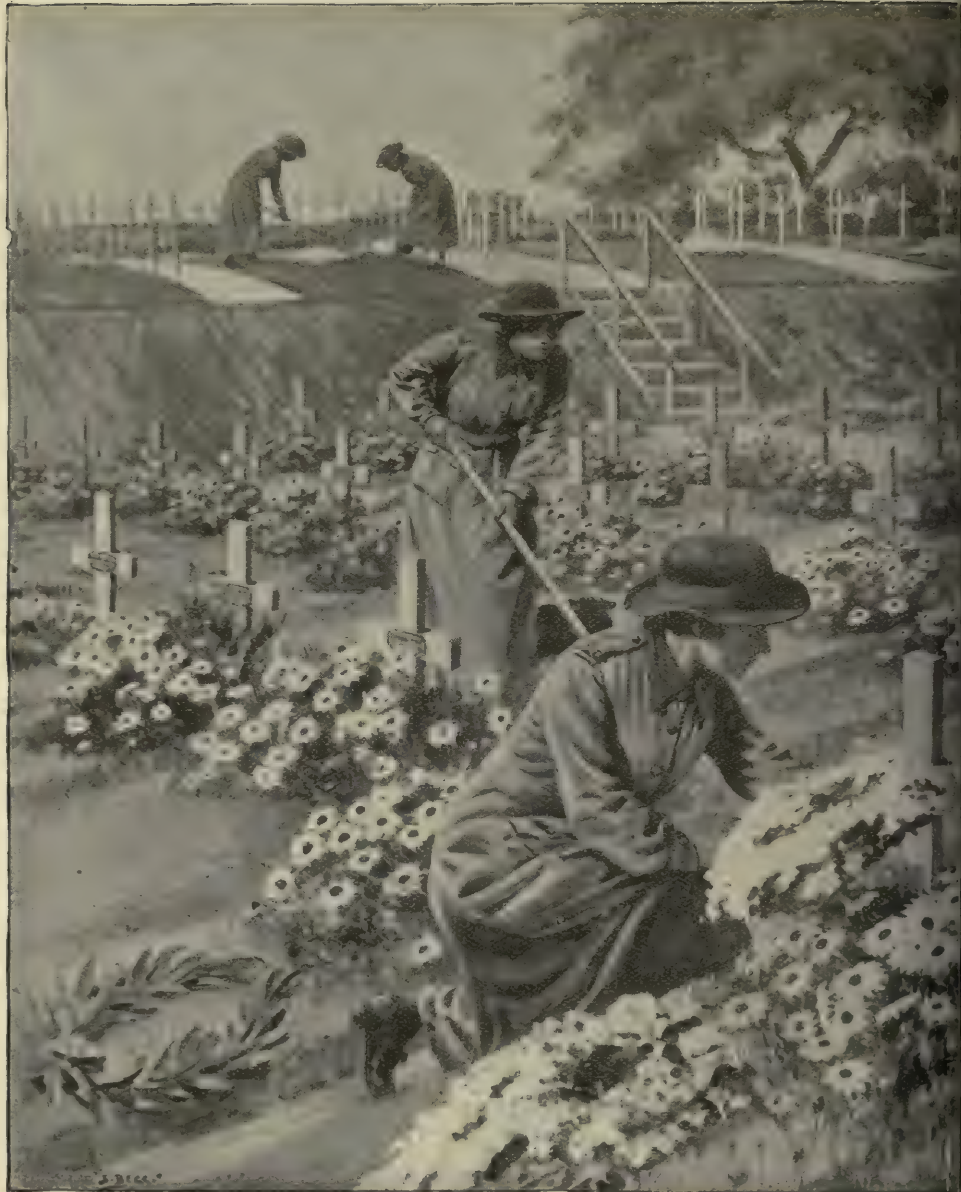
Gordon-Bennett race from Berlin in 1908; and his wife, our hero's mother, sailed another balloon (Banshee II.) from Hurlingham to Whitby in 1912, thereby winning a challenge cup. His brother, an officer in the Grenadier Guards, was severely wounded during the Irish rebellion of 1916. Now let me tell you how this young man, a sportsman born and bred, sacrificed himself on the altar of duty.

A raid on the enemy's trenches was planned, and Lieutenant Dunville, with a party of Scouts and Royal Engineers, was ordered to go forward and clear the way by cutting the enemy's wire. Special protection was needed for a sapper N.C.O. who had a very important piece of work to do. No doubt you know that every British officer worthy of the name thinks first and foremost of his men. In order to cover the N.C.O. while working, Lieutenant Dunville shielded him with his own body from the enemy's snipers. He was hit, and was mortally wounded; nevertheless, he did not stir until the N.C.O. had finished his work. Even then he continued to direct his men, and was not removed from the field until the raid was over. Shortly afterwards he died, leaving a glorious memory of undaunted courage and unselfish devotion. He had not reached his twenty-first birthday.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT THOMAS HAROLD BROADBENT MAUFE, Royal Garrison Artillery.

Two splendid deeds of heroism won this gallant officer his Victoria Cross. On the first occasion the enemy flung a heavy barrage on our front, and an exploding shell severed the telephone wire which connected his battery with the forward observer. Until the wire was repaired his guns could only fire blindly. For any man to venture out into the area where the shells were falling fast and thick appeared to be sudden and awful death. Nevertheless, Lieutenant Maufe went forward, and, risking his life a hundred times, searched about until he found the ends of the broken wire and united them. When this was done the gunners were enabled to receive directions from the observer and open fire once more on the enemy.

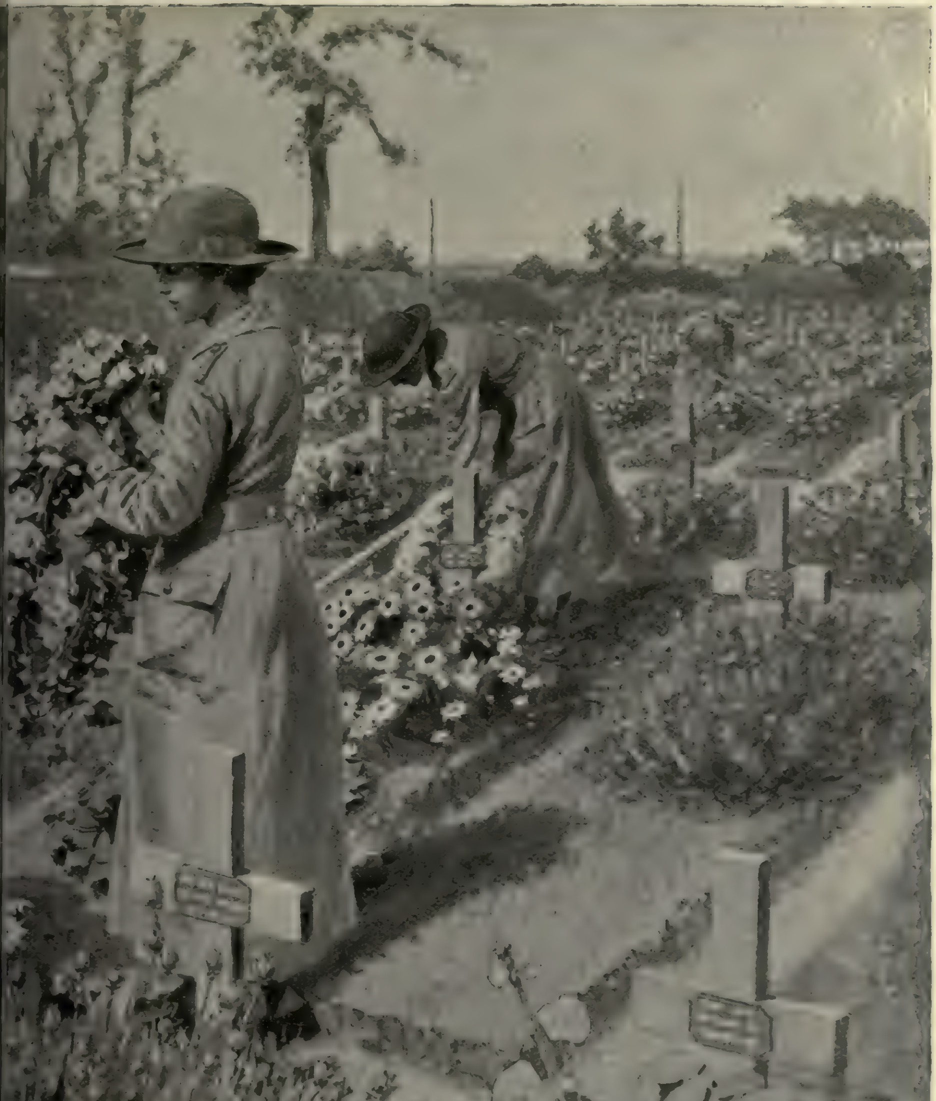
On the second occasion an enemy shell set fire to one of our advanced ammunition dumps. Many of the shells in the great heap contained poison gas, and Lieutenant Maufe at once saw that if the fire extended to them a death-cloud would arise which might kill many of our own men. Again, at the



“In that rich earth a richer dust concealed.” Graves of British Soldiers

(From the picture by S. Begg.

Tender care is taken of the cemeteries in North France and Flanders where the bodies of our he
British cemetery. Some of these girls were trained at Kew Gardens.



ce and Flanders, tended by Trained Women Gardeners of the W.A.A.C.

ission of The Illustrated London News.)

lie buried. The illustration shows girls of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps at work in a gravest possible risk he went forward and put out the fire. By his promptness, resource, and readiness to sacrifice himself, he saved many lives, and set a splendid example to his fellows.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT FRANK BERNARD WEARNE, Essex Regiment.

When war broke out Lieutenant Wearne was an undergraduate at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He heard the call and enlisted. Six months later he received his commission, and was sent to the front, where, in the year 1916, he was severely wounded. In May 1917 he returned to France, and on 28th June lost his life in performing the gallant feat which I am about to describe. His elder brother, Captain Keith Morris Wearne, had already made the great sacrifice; and another brother, fighting with the Canadians, had been wounded.

Lieutenant Wearne was placed in command of a small party on the left of a company detailed to make a raid on the enemy's trenches. In spite of much opposition, he reached his objective, but was counter-attacked again and again by large enemy forces. He might have retired with honour, but he knew that, if the left flank was lost, the remainder of the attacking party would have to give way. He therefore determined to hold on at all costs. When the enemy's attack was being heavily pressed and his comrades were so fiercely assailed that all hope of maintaining the position seemed to have vanished, he leaped on to the parapet, and, followed by a few of his men, ran along the top of the trench, throwing bombs on the advancing enemy. This unexpected and daring manœuvre so surprised the Germans that they fell back, but not until they had severely wounded him. Nevertheless he refused to leave his men, and though suffering agonies of pain, directed and encouraged them while they strengthened the position. When the raid was over and the order to retire was given he was hit again, and this time received his death wound. He was carried from the field, and shortly afterwards died. Thus fell a young hero whose dogged and unwavering courage will for ever glorify the memory of his brief but glorious existence.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT FREDERICK YOUENS, Durham Light Infantry.

I have frequently told you in these pages that the noblest and purest courage which any man can display is to risk his life to save his comrades. While Lieutenant Youens was out on patrol he was hit, and was obliged to return to the trenches to have his wounds dressed. Hardly had the doctor bandaged him when a report was received that the enemy was preparing to raid our positions. At once he set out to rally a Lewis-gun team which had scattered owing to the heavy shell-fire. When he got the men together a bomb fell in the midst of them without bursting. Instantly the lieutenant picked it up and hurled it over the parapet, where it exploded harmlessly. A second bomb fell near the same place shortly afterwards, and again he picked it up with the intention of throwing it clear. Unhappily it burst in his hand, and severely wounded him and some of his comrades. By this time the Lewis gun had opened fire, and the enemy's attack was beaten off. Later in the day the gallant young officer died.

Lance-Corporal Samuel Frickleton, New Zealand Infantry.

During the war the men from "down under" covered themselves with glory by their splendid dash and gallantry. Lance-Corporal Frickleton, though slightly wounded, led his section into our own barrage, only to be met with a stream of bullets from two enemy machine guns. Men fell fast and thick around him, and he saw clearly that the advance could not continue until the guns were destroyed. He went forward alone, and with well-aimed bombs blew up one of the guns and put its crew out of action. Then he turned his attention to the second gun, and with other bombs killed the twelve men who were serving it. His section was then able to advance and seize the enemy's position. While it was being strengthened he received a second wound. He had saved many lives, and had led his little band to victory.

Private John Carroll, Australian Infantry.

Another dashing hero from the Antipodes now claims our attention. Let me tell you something of his wonderful courage and fearlessness during ninety-six crowded hours of strife. The moment that our barrage lifted Private Carroll rushed the enemy's trench and bayoneted four of the enemy. He then noticed a comrade struggling with a German, and likely to be overcome. At once he went to his comrade's assistance and laid the German low. Then he pushed forward again, and in a shell-hole saw four of the enemy with a machine gun. Single-handed he attacked them, killed three of them, and triumphantly carried off the gun. Later in the day, when two of his comrades were buried by an exploding shell, he pushed right into the zone of death and dug them out. The official record of his exploits thus concludes : " His magnificent example of gallantry and devotion to duty inspired all ranks in his battalion."

Private George Pattison, Canadian Infantry.

The same splendid fearlessness and untiring energy were displayed by Private Pattison, who charged a machine gun which was holding up an advance and working great havoc on our troops. Springing forward and jumping from shell-hole to shell-hole, he managed to reach cover within thirty yards of the enemy gun. Then, while a score of snipers tried to pick him off, he began throwing bombs. When several of the German gunners lay dead or dying round their weapon, he seized his rifle, rushed the gun, and bayoneted the five gunners who still remained alive. Thanks to his valour and resource, our men were able to go forward and reach their objective.

Private William Ratcliffe, South Lancashire Regiment.

Private Ratcliffe was a Liverpool man who had spent nearly half his life in the army. When little more than seventeen years of age he enlisted, and was sent to South Africa, where he fought against the Boers. When peace was signed he chose to remain with the colours. After serving eight and a half years with his regiment in India and at home, he was discharged, and, returning to Liverpool, worked as a docker. When the Great War began he was recalled to the colours, and you are now to learn how he became the first docker V.C. His exploit was very similar to that of Private Pattison. Without waiting for orders, he rushed an enemy's machine gun and bayoneted the crew. Hoisting the weapon on his shoulder, he brought it back to his own line, where it was turned against its former owners. " This very gallant soldier had displayed great resource on previous occasions, and had set a very fine example of devotion and fearlessness to his fellows."

Major William Avery Bishop, D.S.O., M.C., Canadian Cavalry and R.F.C.

On September 29, 1917, His Majesty the King bestowed decorations on many heroes at Buckingham Palace. Amongst those who were thus honoured was Major Bishop, a lad nineteen years of age, who had accomplished one of the most amazing deeds of the war, and had rivalled the finest exploits of Captain Ball, the "Wonder Boy." Major Bishop was early noticed as a most gallant, determined, and skilful flying man, and as such was allowed to work independently as a sort of knight errant of the air. He was a slight, fair-haired youth, with a pleasant face.

One morning he crossed the enemy's lines, and flew to an aerodrome ; but finding it empty, went on to another, some three miles away, and twelve miles behind the German front line. There he saw a "travelling circus" of seven Albatross aeroplanes resting on the ground, some of them with their engines running. Descending to within fifty feet of them, he attacked them with his machine gun, and saw a mechanic who was starting one of them fall wounded. A machine managed to rise, but when it was sixty feet up Major Bishop fired fifteen rounds at it, and sent it crashing to the ground.

Turning again, he swept the second Albatross as it was just starting up, and saw it catch fire. Then he began to climb aloft, and as he did so just managed to clear the sheds of the aerodrome. When he was a thousand feet up and every kind of gun was popping away at him, he saw a third machine getting under way, and swiftly raced after it. After a little manœuvring he caught it with the full blast of his machine gun and sent it side-slipping into a clump of trees. The fourth machine by this time was climbing so as to get the advantage of height. Bishop followed it, and for three or four minutes gave chase. The Hun turned to give battle when a fifth machine was well under way. These two machines seemed to have our man sandwiched between them. Paying no attention to the newcomer, our hero blazed away at his enemy, and had the satisfaction of seeing him flutter down completely out of control.

He now turned his attention to the fifth aeroplane, and was just in a favourable position to deal with it when his ammunition gave out. He waved his enemy a farewell with the empty drum and started on his homeward journey of over a hundred miles. Happily he reached his own lines safely. In his ninety minutes of fighting he had gone through as much adventure as would last an ordinary man ninety days. He had engaged nine machines, had driven down one in flames, and had sent three others nose-spinning to certain destruction. Up to the time when he received the premier decoration he had been up one hundred and twelve times, and had destroyed forty-seven enemy machines.

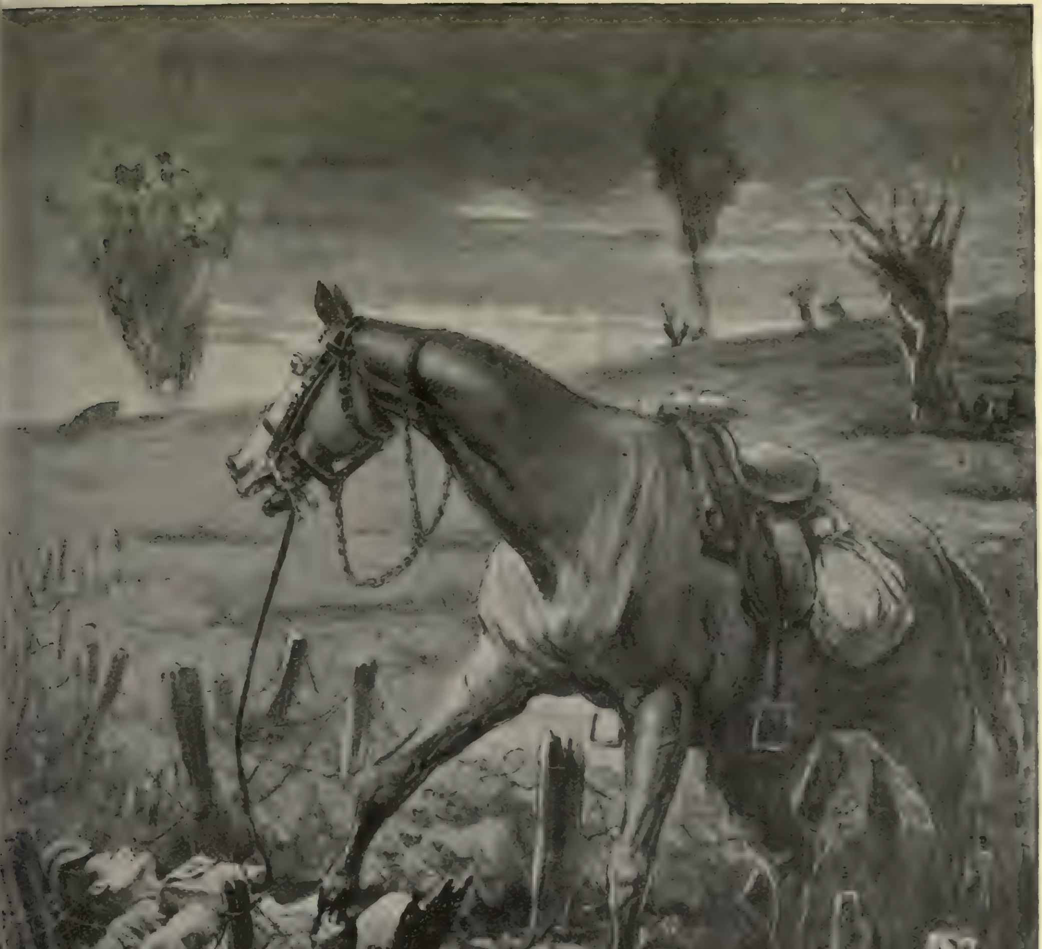
I am sure you would like to hear of other exploits performed by this intrepid airman. Once he encountered three Albatross scouts. They separated and tried to surround him. It seemed that his time had come, for the bullets were swishing and whining through his machine, past his ears, and all around him. Then his marvellous luck saved him. One of the Huns came right across his line of fire. Bishop let go the trigger of his Lewis gun, and the Hun crashed to earth, while the victorious Canadian flew homewards.

Another exploit which tickled the flying men immensely was his finding among the clouds his equally juvenile C.O. having a fearful scrap with five Huns in brand-new machines. Bishop dashed out of the clouds to his assistance with his Lewis gun clattering. The first Hun crashed before he knew what had happened, a stream of bullets catching both pilot and observer from the rear. The next machine received a broadside, and went spinning giddily to earth. The other three turned tail and ran, so Bishop and his youthful commander flew home, "stunting" all the way.

You will notice that Major Bishop had already been awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross. These decorations, along with the Victoria Cross, were pinned on his breast by the King, who shook hands with him, and heartily congratulated him on his splendid work. Second-Lieutenant Thomas Harold Maufe, whose story has already been told, also received his decoration at the same time.

CAPTAIN HAROLD ACKROYD, M.C., M.D., R.A.M.C. (attached to the Royal Berkshire Regiment).

Again a doctor figures in our record, and gives up his life in the divine work of succouring his stricken and suffering comrades. During the summer fighting Captain Ackroyd distinguished himself by his splendid gallantry and devotion to duty. Utterly careless of his own life, he moved up and down the line, exposed to every kind of danger, tending the wounded and saving the lives of many officers and men. On two occasions he went out into the open and faced the fire of



Fidelity.

(From the picture by Wallace Coop. By permission of the Illustrated London News.)

During one of the battles on the Western front a machine-gun officer, reconnoitring in a forward position, observed a riderless horse standing beside its dead master. It was one of a gun team, and evidently was so fond of its rider that it refused to leave him.

snipers and machine gunners in order to bring in those who lay in agony. Not only so, but he cheered the fighting men while he comforted the wounded. You cannot imagine a nobler life and death than his.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BERTRAM BEST-DUNKLEY, Lancashire Fusiliers.

During an advance, and while in command of his battalion, the leading waves became scattered owing to very heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from positions supposed to be in our hands. Seeing the confusion, Colonel Best-Dunkley dashed forward, rallied the dispersed men, led them onward, and despite heavy losses, carried position after position until all his objectives had been gained. But for his gallant and determined action it is doubtful whether success would have been attained. Later in the day, when the enemy made his counter-attacks, he went to the rescue of his sorely-beset men with the motley array collected from the headquarters staff, and succeeded in beating off the advancing foe. He was severely wounded during the struggle, and afterwards died.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE.—II.

SKIPPER JOSEPH WATT, Royal Naval Reserve.

Probably you are aware that during the war a large number of trawlers and drifters were taken over by the Government as mine-sweepers and patrol boats, and that they were manned, not by men of the Royal Navy, but by fishermen, merchant skippers, and seamen. Over and over again the hardy, skilful, and gallant fellows who manned these boats won the highest praise from the naval authorities. Sir John Jellicoe more than once referred to them in very high terms of appreciation. The trawlers and drifters not only patrolled British seas, but operated in the Mediterranean. I will now tell you how the skipper of a drifter actually fought an Austrian cruiser in the spirit of Sir Richard Grenville.

On May 15, 1917, a large number of British drifters were patrolling the Strait of Otranto,* watching the anti-submarine nets. They were disposed in eight divisions, each of about six boats. Each drifter carried a crew of ten men, and was armed with one small gun. At dawn three Austrian cruisers appeared and attacked them. One of the cruisers steamed up to within a hundred yards of the drifter *Gowan Lea*, commanded by Skipper Watt, and signalled to him, by blasts on her syren and by dipping her flag, that he was to stop and abandon his vessel. In reply to this demand the skipper rang down to the engine-room, "Full steam ahead;" and calling upon his crew for three British cheers, bade them fight to the last. They manned the gun and opened fire with good effect, until a shot from the cruiser disabled the breech. The brave fellows, however, stuck to their gun, and, still under heavy fire,

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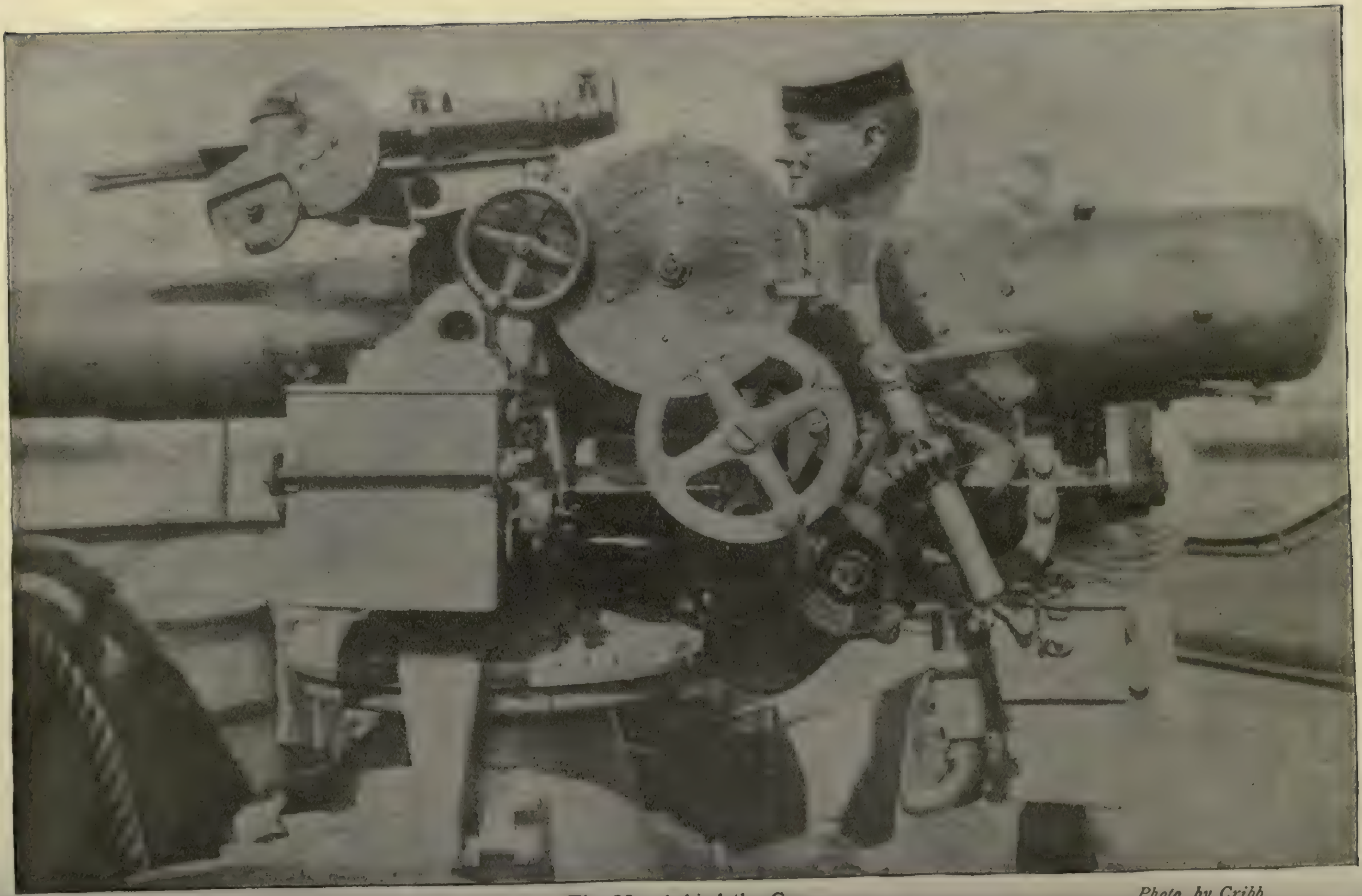
* The stretch of water between South Italy and Albania.



The Man behind the Gun. *Photo. by Cribb.*

endeavoured to repair the damage. While they were so engaged the cruiser passed out of range.

Though the *Gowan Lea* had escaped, some of her consorts had been sunk, and others had been badly damaged. One of the vessels which had suffered severely, but still floated, was the *Floandi*. Seeing her plight, Skipper Watt went to her assistance. He discovered that she had four men killed and three wounded. Her skipper, though hit in three places, had remained at his post throughout the action. For the gallant manner in which Skipper Watt took his vessel alongside the *Floandi* and saved the survivors of her crew he was awarded the Victoria Cross, and I am sure you will agree that he fully deserved it.

In the meantime the other two cruisers were directing a heavy fire against the other divisions of drifters, fourteen of which were sunk before the end of the action. Though the odds were overwhelming, the crews made a gallant fight, and refused to abandon their vessels until they were sinking beneath them. For example, the crew of the *Admirable* only took to their boats after the boiler had exploded and the wheelhouse had been shot away. Even then a seaman named Gordon scrambled on board again, and strove to fight the gun single-handed. Unhappily the gallant fellow was killed in the attempt. The crew of the *Taits*, when they had taken to their boats, discovered that one of their number was missing. Despite the heavy fire, they returned to their vessel to search for him. Joseph Hendry of the *Serene* preferred to go down with his ship rather than be taken prisoner, and was in the water an hour before he was picked up. Other crews stood by their ships all through the action, and managed to escape.

One of the drifters in each group was fitted with wireless telegraph apparatus, and against these vessels the enemy specially directed his fire. The wireless operators with splendid fortitude remained at their posts throughout the action. The rear-admiral forwarded to the Admiralty the wireless telegraph log of the *Floandi*, that it might be placed in the National War Museum. With the log he sent the following letter :—

"This log was found in this condition in the wireless operating cabin of H.M. Drifter *Floandi*, after an attack on the drifter line by three Austrian cruisers in the Adriatic Sea on May 15, 1917.

> "The wireless operator, Douglas Morris Harris, A.B., R.N.V.R., continued to send and receive messages, although the drifter was being riddled by shells, until he was killed by a piece of shrapnel while writing in the log. The piece of shell perforated the log, and the line made by his pencil when he was hit and collapsed can be seen on the page upon which he was writing.
>
> "The operator was found dead in his chair, lying over the log."

No words of mine can do justice to the scores of noble souls who maintained the proud traditions of British seamanship during this foul attack. Remember that the men who so gloriously did their duty to the last were not trained for the work of war. They were peaceful toilers of the sea; but in the hour of danger they proved themselves worthy to rank with Blake and Nelson.

ACTING-CAPTAIN RIVERSDALE COLYER-FERGUSSON, Northampton Regiment.

During an advance the ground proved to be so difficult, and the enemy's wire so formidable, that the plan of attack could not be carried out as arranged. In the confusion that followed Captain Colyer-Fergusson found himself with the small following of a sergeant and five men. Nevertheless he and his gallant comrades went forward, and succeeded in capturing and clearing the enemy trench. His little party was then threatened by a heavy counter-attack from the left front. While the Germans were advancing, the captain, attended only by his orderly, rushed forward and captured an enemy machine gun. This he turned on the attackers, and was thus able to drive many of them into the hands of a British unit which was pushing forward in the neighbourhood. Later in the day he went out again, this time with his sergeant, and seized a second machine gun. With this, and with the help of reinforcements from his company, he was able to hold off the enemy while he made the trench capable of defence. The official record thus concludes: "The conduct of this officer throughout forms an amazing story of dash, gallantry, and skill, for which no reward can be too great, considering the importance of the position won." Captain Colyer-Fergusson was killed shortly afterwards by a sniper.

SERGEANT ROBERT BYE, Welsh Guards.

While making an attack, the leading waves of the Welsh Guards found themselves checked by two blockhouses from which a heavy machine-gun fire beat down upon them. Sergeant Bye, without waiting for orders, rushed one of these blockhouses, and put the garrison out of action. He then rejoined his company, and went forward with them to the capture of the second position assigned to his regiment. When the Guards advanced towards the third position, they passed a line of blockhouses which they did not pause to clear. It was necessary, however, to capture them, lest the enemy garrisons should fire upon our men from the rear. Sergeant Bye, ever to the fore, volunteered to lead a party which was told off for this work. As soon as the blockhouses were in our hands and the Germans in them were either dead or prisoners, he ran on to join his company, and was in time to take part in the capture of the third objective. All through the day he showed wonderful courage and resource, and by the evening had secured a big bag of prisoners.

CORPORAL LESLIE WILTON ANDREW, New Zealand Infantry.

A machine-gun post had been discovered in a building standing by itself, and Corporal Andrew, in command of a small party, was ordered to capture it. As he went forward on this errand he unexpectedly came upon a machine-gun post that was holding up the advance of another company. At once he attacked this post, captured the machine gun which it contained, and killed several of the crew. Having taken this strong point in his stride, as it were, he set off for the post which had been assigned to him, and so skilfully did he dispose his men, and so determined was his attack, that it too fell. His cool daring and fine leadership won him the highest praise from his commanding officer, and led to the award of the premier decoration.

CORPORAL JAMES LLEWELLYN DAVIES, Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

When the Welsh Fusiliers were held up by a machine-gun post and several men who had attempted to capture it lay dead around it, this gallant sergeant pushed through our own barrage, and, all alone, rushed upon the gunners. He bayoneted one of them, took another prisoner, and seized the gun, which he brought into his own lines. Though he was wounded in the course of this dashing attack, he " carried on " in the most determined fashion. He led a bombing party against a house that had been turned into a little fortress, and again was successful. Finally, he killed a sniper who was harassing his platoon. During these later adventures he was wounded so severely that he died shortly afterwards. Wales has had many heroic sons, and Corporal Davies was worthy to rank with the most heroic of them.

PRIVATE THOMAS BARRATT, South Staffordshire Regiment.

A "Black Country" soldier now finds a place in our golden book of valour. Private Barratt was a renowned "shot," and was frequently engaged in scouting and patrol work. As a scout he worked his way towards the enemy line with wonderful coolness and skill, in spite of the fact that he was continually fired at by hostile snipers. These he stalked and killed, and thus enabled his patrol to make headway. On a later occasion his comrades were again held up by sharpshooters, whom he again disposed of. As the patrol was retreating after having done its work, a party of the enemy was seen trying to outflank it. At once Private Barratt volunteered to stay behind and cover the retirement. By means of accurate and rapid shooting he held up the enemy while his comrades reached safety. The official record says: "Throughout the enterprise he was under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, and his splendid example of coolness and daring was beyond all praise. After safely regaining our lines this very gallant soldier was killed by a shell."

PRIVATE GEORGE M'INTOSH, Gordon Highlanders.

Private M'Intosh was a native of Buckie, and was twenty years of age when he won the coveted cross. He was educated at Fraserburgh High School, and at the outbreak of war was employed on the Buckie Harbour extension works. As a Territorial he was a trained man, and was, therefore, sent to France with the first batch of his battalion. The following is his own description of the exploit which enrolled him amongst the bravest of the brave:—

"I was the left-hand man of my company, and had next to me a company of a London regiment. After leaving the trenches for the attack, our line advanced fully 3,000 yards, when we were fired at by a couple of hidden machine guns and a party of snipers who were in a fortified house. We all lay down, and the machine guns sprayed lead upon us. I could stand it no longer, so I got up and rushed towards the house. How I escaped the hail of bullets from machine guns and snipers I do not know. When I had covered 400 yards I reached the house, and found an entrance at the back. I had a good supply of bombs and a revolver. Inside the house I saw about twenty Germans. My first bomb killed two men, and then there was a mix-up of rifle fire at point-blank range. One bullet went through my haversack. With bomb and revolver I drove the crowd of Germans back into the veranda, and then I picked up the two machine guns and carried them off. While I was busy with the Boches they could not fire on our fellows, who rose, rushed forward, and completely routed them."

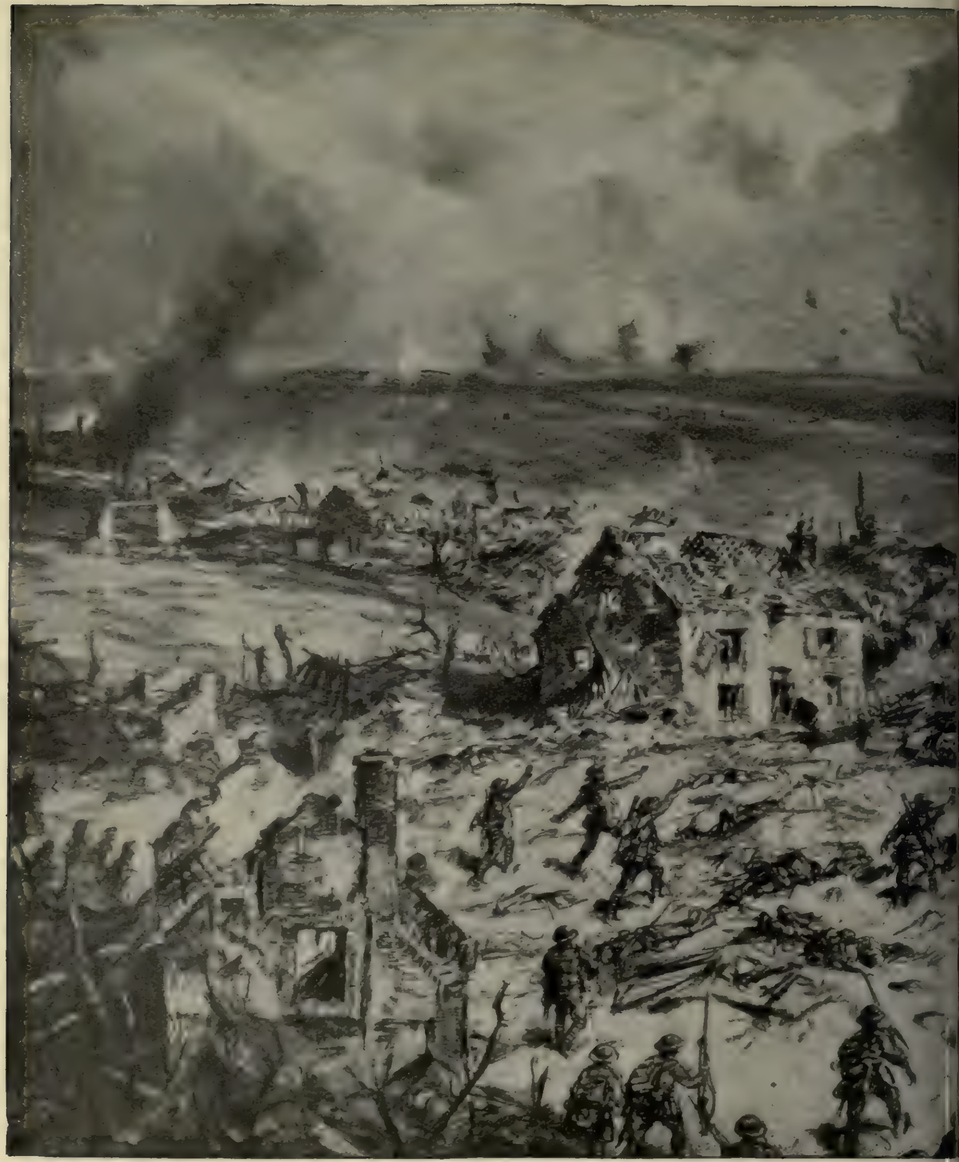
Major Duff, commanding the Gordons, wrote home to say that M'Intosh well deserved the high honour that he had won ; and so say all of us.

Private Thomas Witham, Coldstream Guards.

Already in this chapter I have told you of several heroes who took their lives in their hands and rushed machine guns which were shooting down their comrades. Private Witham "spotted" a machine gun which was enfilading his battalion on the right, and without waiting for orders began to stalk it. He worked his way from shell-hole to shell-hole through our own barrage, and when within a short distance dashed down upon it. An officer and two men threw up their hands, and they along with the gun were captured by the gallant private, who thus saved many lives and enabled the whole line to advance.

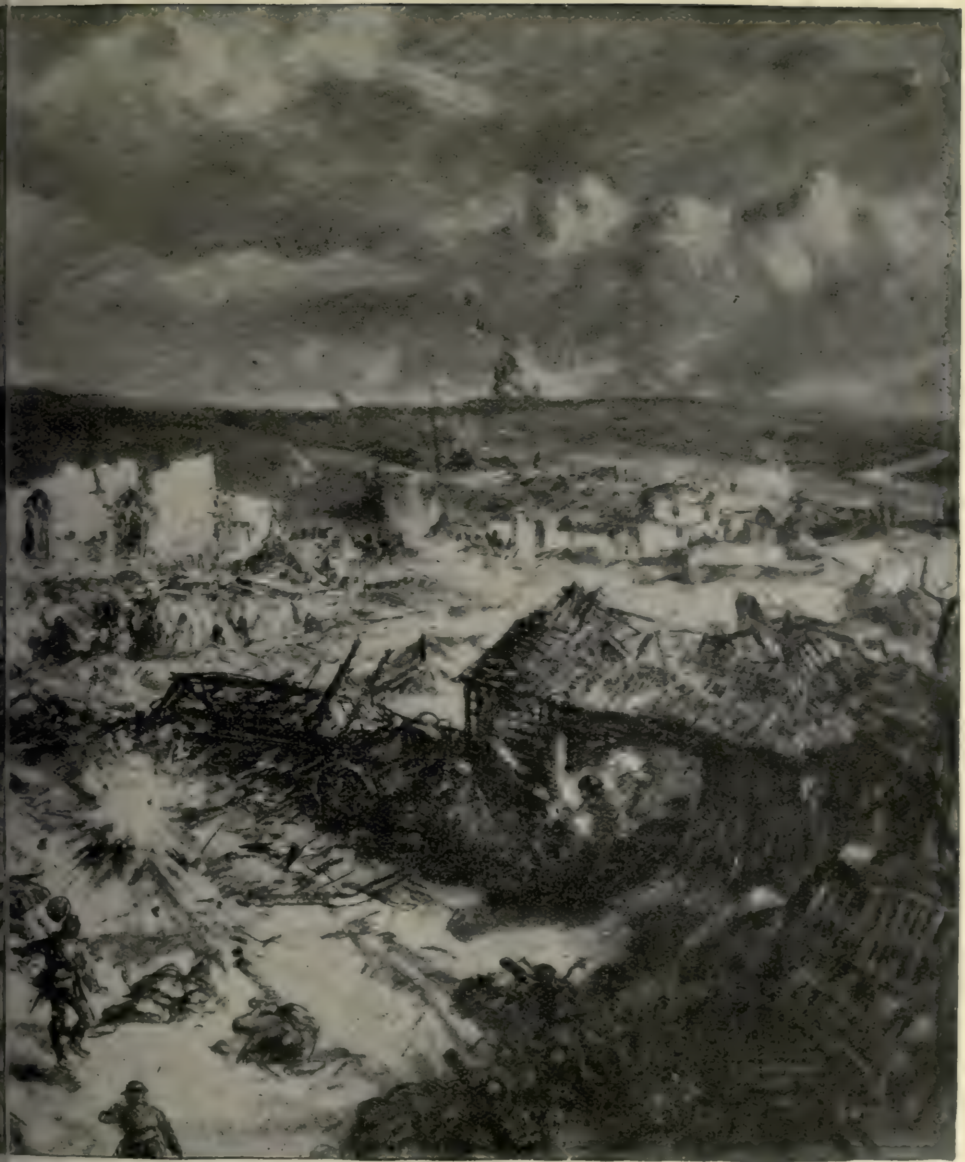
Captain Noel Godfrey Chavasse, V.C., M.C., R.A.M.C. and Liverpool Regiment.

In Chapter XXV. of our sixth volume (page 286) I told you that Captain Chavasse was awarded the Victoria Cross for his many glorious deeds in saving the lives of wounded men. I am now about to tell you how he won the red badge of supreme courage a second time. Early in an action he was severely wounded while carrying a disabled soldier to the dressing-station. No one would have blamed him if he had made his way to the rear ; but Captain Chavasse never thought of himself. He was in great pain, and had been without food for two days ; nevertheless he not only continued to perform his duties, but repeatedly went out under heavy fire to search for the wounded and give them succour and encouragement. Though worn out with fatigue and faint from loss of blood, he helped to carry in several of these men across heavy and difficult ground. Nowhere in the annals of war can you find a more inspiring



British Bombing Party clearin

(*From picture by D. Macpher*



age strongly held by the Enemy.

ermission of The Sphere.)

example of self-sacrifice. The military authorities felt that his noble disregard of self and his tender care for others entitled him to receive a second time the highest award of valour, and a bar was added to his Victoria Cross. Sad to say, he died of his wounds soon after the battle. Liverpool was very proud of Captain Chavasse, and sincerely grieved at his loss. Great sympathy was expressed for his father, the bishop of the diocese.

Brigadier-General Clifford Coffin, D.S.O., Royal Engineers.

It is not often that a man of such high rank as a brigadier-general is afforded an opportunity for the display of that personal valour which wins the Victoria Cross. As such officers are chiefly engaged in the direction of affairs, the chance of actually taking part in the business of fighting does not frequently fall to their lot. Brigadier-General Coffin's opportunity came when his command was held up during an attack by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from the front and right flank. While his men were putting an advanced shell-hole into a condition of defence, he went forward and made an inspection of his front posts. Under the heaviest fire, and in full view of the enemy, he went to and fro, walking quietly from shell-hole to shell-hole, giving instructions and advice, and cheering his men by his calmness and utter disregard of danger. The effect was wonderful: his sorely-tried men were encouraged to hold on, and they gathered new confidence from his example and cheerfulness. Had he not stepped into the breach, the whole line would certainly have been driven back.

Lieutenant John Reginald Noble Graham, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and Machine Gun Corps.

Before the war Lieutenant Graham, who was born on Loch Lomondside, was a clerk in a Glasgow office. During an attack he was in command of a machine-gun section. He accompanied his guns across open ground under very heavy fire, and when several of his men were shot down, assisted in carrying the ammunition. He was twice wounded; nevertheless he "carried on," and with one of his guns opened a very accurate fire on enemy troops who were massing for a counter-attack. This gun was put out of action by the enemy's rifle-fire, and he was again wounded. The advancing enemy forced him to fall back, but before doing so he rendered the gun completely useless. He then brought a Lewis gun into action with excellent effect, and served it until all his ammunition was expended. For a fourth time he was hit, and loss of blood forced him to retire, but not until his valour and his skilful handling of the guns had held up a strong counter-attack which threatened to roll up the left flank of his brigade. Thanks to him, a very great danger to our line was averted.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT DENIS GEORGE WYLDBORE HEWITT, Hampshire Regiment.

Second-Lieutenant Hewitt had led his command forward to its first objective, and had reorganized his men ready for a further advance. While waiting for the barrage to lift, he was hit by a piece of shell which exploded the signal lights in his haversack and set fire to his clothes. The fire was put out; but he was severely burned, and though in agony not only from his burns but his wounds, insisted on leading forward the remains of his company. Despite very heavy machine-gun fire, a successful advance was made, and the final objective was captured. Even then he did not cease in well-doing. While directing and encouraging his men who were strengthening the position, he was shot by a sniper. Throughout the advance his coolness and contempt of danger set a magnificent example to the whole battalion, and the capture of the final position was almost entirely due to his splendid leading.

SERGEANT EDWARD COOPER, King's Royal Rifle Corps.

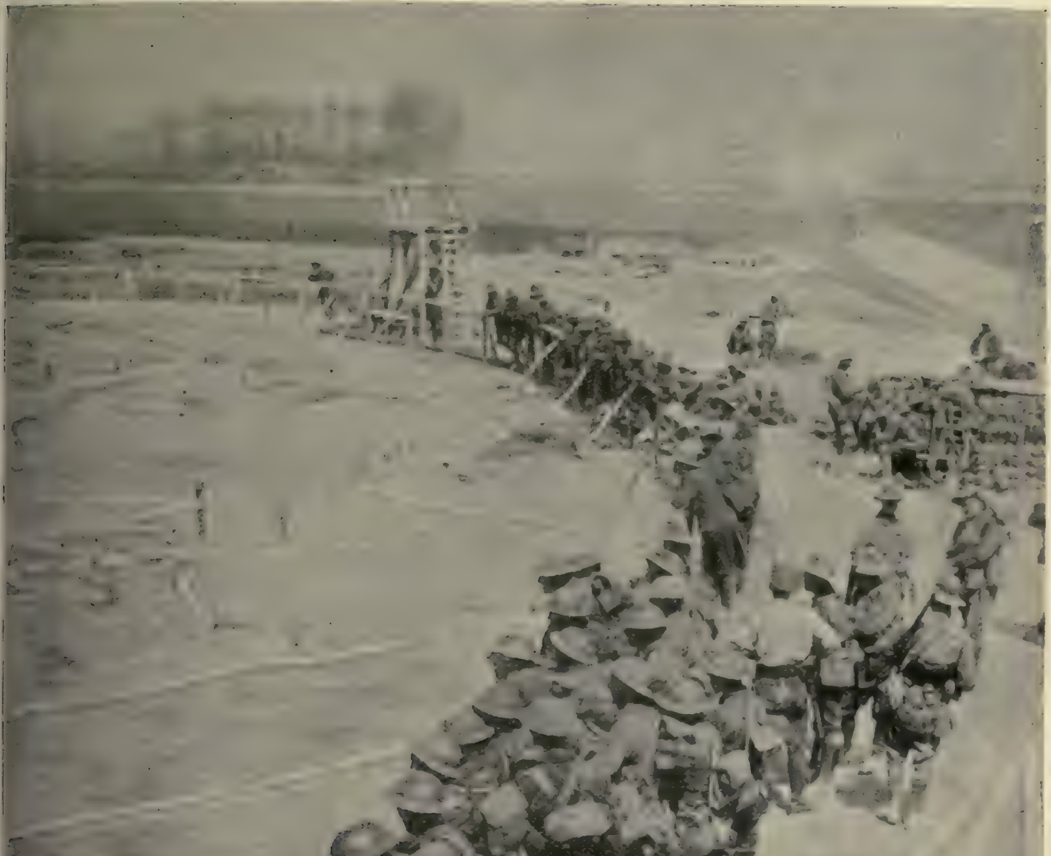
I have already told you that the German system of defence in the Ypres area consisted of fortified blockhouses, usually the ruins of farms and outbuildings strengthened by cement. The little circular redoubts, you will remember, our men called "pill-boxes." Such little fortresses were very formidable, and were so skilfully dotted over the field that they enfiladed our men as they advanced. No real progress could be made until each of them had been rushed or otherwise captured. Sergeant Cooper's battalion was held up by a concrete blockhouse some 250 yards to its front. Machine guns were pouring a steady stream of bullets from the loopholes, and many of our men fell. With three comrades Sergeant Cooper rushed towards the fort, and by some miracle he and his little command got within a hundred yards of the walls. They then lay down and began firing at the openings. Finding that this did not silence the machine guns, Sergeant Cooper sprang up, and, dashing forward to a loophole, thrust in the muzzle of his revolver and fired shot after shot. The result was that the guns ceased firing and the garrison surrendered. Seven machine guns and forty-five prisoners were thus captured. By this daring deed Sergeant Cooper had removed a great obstacle from the path of his battalion, and by putting the enemy machine guns out of action had saved many lives. His Victoria Cross was gloriously won.

SERGEANT ALEXANDER EDWARDS, Seaforth Highlanders.

Before the war Sergeant Edwards was a cooper living in the little fishing town of Lossiemouth, Elginshire. During an attack he discovered in a wood the precise whereabouts of a machine gun which was playing with deadly effect upon his comrades. With great dash and courage he led several men against it, killed all the team, and captured the gun. Later on, when a sniper was picking off our men, he crawled out to stalk him, and, although badly wounded in the arm, went on and killed him. By this time only one officer was left with his company. Realizing that unless the farthest objective was captured the whole operation would be unsuccessful, the indomitable sergeant took command, and before long was master of the enemy's position. Then he proved that he was not only a very brave man, but a skilful soldier to boot. Under his directions the trench was made capable of defence, and again and again in the most daring fashion he went out to ascertain the position and movements of the enemy. On the following day he was twice wounded. "This very gallant N.C.O.," says the official record, "maintained throughout a complete disregard for personal safety, and his high example of coolness and determination aroused a fine fighting spirit in his men."

SERGEANT WILLIAM H. GRIMBALDESTON, King's Own Scottish Borderers.

Sergeant Grimbaldeston's exploit greatly resembles that of Sergeant Cooper. The unit on his left was held up by enemy machine-gun fire from a blockhouse. Though wounded, he collected a group of men, and placed them in a position from which they could fire rifle grenades into the little fortress. When this method of attack proved unavailing he rushed forward through very heavy fire, and though the enemy from within the "pill-box" hurled a bomb at him, he was unhurt. Then he compelled the garrison to surrender one after another. His extraordinary boldness resulted in the capture of thirty-six



A Battle rehearsed: Troops studying a Model of the Positions which they are to capture.

(*Australian Official Photograph.*)

This picture shows you Australian soldiers studying a model of the Messines Ridge. The model covered more than an acre of ground, and was true in every detail.

prisoners, six machine guns, and one trench mortar. Further, he enabled the whole line to continue its advance.

Sergeant Ivor Rees, South Wales Borderers.

Sergeant Rees was the first Llanelly soldier to win the coveted distinction. At the time he had been at the front for three years. He sent the joyful news home in the following letter : " I am pleased to say I came through the last push safe and sound, and have been recommended for the V.C. I hope I shall get it. Mother, what do you say ? It will mean some weeks' leave, and possibly a commission. How would you like to see me an officer ? What hopes, eh ! "

The exploit which produced this letter was the capture of a machine gun which opened fire at short range and caused many casualties amongst our men. Leading his platoon forward by short rushes, Sergeant Rees gradually worked his way round the right flank to the rear of the gun which was doing the mischief. When he was about twenty yards from the weapon he rushed forward, shot one of the team and bayoneted another. He then bombed the large concrete gun post, and after killing five of the occupants captured thirty prisoners, of whom two were officers. He also seized an undamaged machine gun.

Sergeant John Skinner, King's Own Scottish Borderers.

Sergeant Skinner was a native of Pollokshields, Glasgow. He joined the K.O.S.B. during the South African War, and afterwards remained with his regiment. During the fighting against the Boers he was wounded, and before the end of the day on which he enrolled himself amongst the bravest of the brave had been hit no fewer than six times. He was suffering from a wound in the head when his company was checked by heavy machine-gun fire on the left flank. Collecting six men, he led them with great skill round the left flank of the three blockhouses which contained the machine guns, and began hurling bombs at the first obstacle. He captured this blockhouse single-handed ; then, with the help of his six men, cleared the other two and took sixty prisoners, three machine guns, and two trench mortars. Owing to his dash and gallantry, the line was able to advance and reach and hold its objective.

Lance-Sergeant Tom Fletcher Mayson, Royal Lancashire Rifles.

A very daring soldier from Cumberland also distinguished himself in much the same way. Lance-Sergeant Mayson saw the leading wave of the attack held up by machine-gun fire from his flank, and without waiting for orders made for the gun. He bombed the team, wounded four of its members, and when the remaining three fled, followed them into a dug-out, where he disposed of them with his bayonet. Later in the day he again tackled a machine gun and killed six of the men serving it. Finally, during an enemy counter-attack, he took charge of a post which was cut off, and held it until all his ammunition was gone and he was ordered to withdraw. For many a long day in the Cumbrian village of Silecroft, beneath the lonely height of Black Combe, the story of Lance-Sergeant Mayson's dash and valour will be proudly told.

Private Wilford Edwards, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

In reading these accounts of valorous deeds you must have been struck by the manner in which our men, when in a tight place, acted on their own responsibility without waiting for orders. In no other army is there such a readiness to spring into the breach and take the lead when prompt action is necessary. When, for example, the officers in Private Edwards's company had been shot down by bullets from a concrete fort, he dashed forward, careless of his own life, and flung bombs through the loopholes until he had silenced the guns, and had captured three officers and thirty men. Then, when he had completely reduced the fort, he waved to his company to advance. " By his splendid example he saved a most critical situation at a time when a whole battalion was held up and a leader was urgently needed." You will not be surprised to learn that this born soldier did yeoman service in other ways. For example, he acted as a " runner," and guided his battalion over very difficult ground. It is impossible to overestimate the value of the fine example which he set to his comrades.

Lieutenant George Bonner, R.N.R.

Lieutenant Bonner was the second of the " Mystery V.C.'s." All we were permitted to know about his exploit was that he showed " conspicuous gallantry and consummate coolness in action with an enemy submarine." He was the son of a farmer residing at Walsall, Staffordshire, and received his early training on board the school-ship *Conway*, which lies in the Mersey. At the age of sixteen he became an apprentice on a merchant vessel owned by Messrs. George Milne and Co., and visited every maritime country in the world except New Zealand. He was on board the *Inchmore* when she came into collision with the German liner *Kaiser Wilhelm II.* off the Isle of Wight just before the war. He was at Antwerp when war broke out, but managed to escape, and joined the Royal Naval Division as an A.B., though at the time he had held a master's certificate for ten years. In July 1916 he won the D.S.M. for services in connection with anti-submarine work, and shortly afterwards received a commission. His Victoria Cross was conferred upon him by the King at Sandringham on Sunday, 7th October.

PRIVATE ARNOLD LOOSEMORE, West Riding Regiment.

Private Loosemore was the third Sheffield " blade " to win the Victoria Cross. He was advancing with his platoon against a strongly held enemy position, defended by wire, when the furious fire of machine guns called a halt. Dragging his Lewis gun with him, he crawled through the partially cut wire, and opened fire on a strong party of the enemy, killing about twenty of them. By so doing he enabled his comrades to " dig in " instead of retiring. Immediately afterwards his Lewis gun was blown up by a bomb, and three Germans rushed towards them. With his revolver he shot them all. Later in the day he accounted for several snipers, and while returning to his own lines brought in a wounded man under heavy fire.

" Unbounded courage and compassion joined,
Tempering each other in the victor's mind,
Alternately proclaim him good and great,
And make the hero and the man complete."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE.—III.

SKIPPER THOMAS CRISP, R.N.R.

In the previous chapter I told you how gallantly the fishermen and merchant seamen who manned the drifters in the Strait of Otranto stood up to the attack of three Austrian cruisers. You are now to hear how Skipper Thomas Crisp of the smack *Nelson* fought a submarine with the utmost heroism, and went down with his ship, undaunted to the last.

On an August afternoon of the year 1917, at about a quarter to three, the smack *Nelson* when on the port tack shot her trawl. She was armed with one gun, and was engaged in the anti-submarine service. She shot her trawl for two reasons—first, to deceive the enemy into believing that she was an unarmed and peaceful fishing vessel; and, second, to provide food for the crew. While this was being done, the captain was below packing fish, and the deck hand was gutting fish for the next morning's breakfast. After a time the skipper came on deck, and, scanning the horizon, saw an object which looked suspicious. He examined it closely, and then sent for his glasses.

He had scarcely peeped through them before he sang out, "Clear for action. Submarine." The words were hardly out of his mouth when a shot flung up a fountain of water about a hundred yards away on the port bow. The motor man at once hurried to his engine, the deck hand dropped the fish that he was cleaning and ran to the ammunition room, while the other hands scrambled on deck and awaited the skipper's orders. "Let go your gear. Let go the warp; put a dan on the end of it." Meanwhile the gunlayer held his fire, until the skipper said, "It's no use waiting any longer; let them have it."

Away in the distance the submarine fired shell after shell at the smack. The fourth shot went through the port bow, just below the water-line, and the skipper, who was steering, slewed the vessel round. There was no confusion, not even when the seventh shell struck the skipper, passed through his side, then through the deck, and cut its way through the hull of the vessel. The skipper's son Tom, the second hand, at once took his father's place at the tiller, and the firing continued. All the time water was pouring into the ship, and she was fast settling down.

The gunlayer went to the skipper to render him first aid, but he saw in a moment that nothing could save him. He was mortally wounded, but his splendid courage did not desert him. "It's all right, boy; do your best," said the stricken man, and then ordered the second hand to send a wireless message off. This was the message:—

"*Nelson* being attacked by submarine. Skipper killed. Send assistance at once."

Lower and lower sank the vessel, and now only five rounds of ammunition were left. Then the gallant old sea-dog cried, "Abandon ship. Throw the books overboard." The second hand asked if he might lift him down into the boat; but his answer was, "Tom, I'm done; throw me overboard."

He was too badly wounded to be moved, so his shipmates were forced to leave him on the deck of the doomed vessel and take to the small boat. A quarter of an hour later the *Nelson* went down by the head, and with it went one of the bravest men who ever served his Majesty at sea.

By this time dusk had covered the face of the waters. All night the crew pulled at the oars. Towards morning the wind freshened and blew them out of their course. They hoisted a pair of trousers, and fixing a large piece of oilskin on two upright oars in order to attract attention, continued to pull all that day. Once they sighted a vessel, and later a group of mine-sweepers; but the ships passed on without seeing them. At night the weather became finer; they laboured at the oars all through the hours of darkness, and at daybreak fell in with a buoy, to which they made fast. They now knew that they were in the track of ships, and that sooner or later they would be seen and rescued. That afternoon a ship came by and took them on board. So ends the story of the *Nelson*, a mere fishing

A Resting Place of Heroes.

(*Australian official photograph.*)

The photograph, taken through a damaged church window, shows an officer reverently scanning the inscriptions on the crosses which mark the graves of the fallen. One of them bears the epitaph, "Here lies a British soldier."

smack manned by peaceful toilers of the sea, who nevertheless, in the hour of danger and in the service of their country, showed as fine a courage and as stern a fortitude as the glorious seaman after whom their bark was named. We shall ever think of them as

> " Inspiring the creed of an island breed
> That has learnt to dare and die."

You will be glad to learn that Thomas William Crisp, the second hand, who took charge of the tiller when his father had been shot down, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

PETTY OFFICER ERNEST PILCHER, R.N.

Another " Mystery V.C." now figures in the proud record. The Admiralty, no doubt for a good reason, did not divulge the details of the heroic deed or deeds which won him the coveted honour. We only know that he was selected by his mates in a gun crew to receive the award. Though the veil of secrecy is drawn over his exploit, we may be sure that he displayed outstanding courage, and faithfully maintained the grand traditions of the British navy.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT HARDY FALCONER PARSONS, Gloucester Regiment.

Second-Lieutenant Parsons was in command of a bombing post which during the night was attacked by a strong party of Germans who carried with them a liquid fire apparatus. This they turned upon our bombers, and drove them back. The lieutenant, however, refused to leave his post, and, although severely scorched and burnt by the liquid fire, continued to keep back the enemy by incessantly throwing bombs. He knew that he could not escape; but he knew, too, that if he could hold up the enemy for a sufficient time another bombing party would be organized and the position would be saved. So he flung bomb after bomb, and, all alone, defied the enemy to enter his trench. At length he fell badly wounded. As he did so reinforcements arrived, and succeeded in driving back the Germans before they could capture our position. This gallant and devoted young officer afterwards died of his wounds.

SERGEANT JOHN CARMICHAEL, North Staffordshire Regiment.

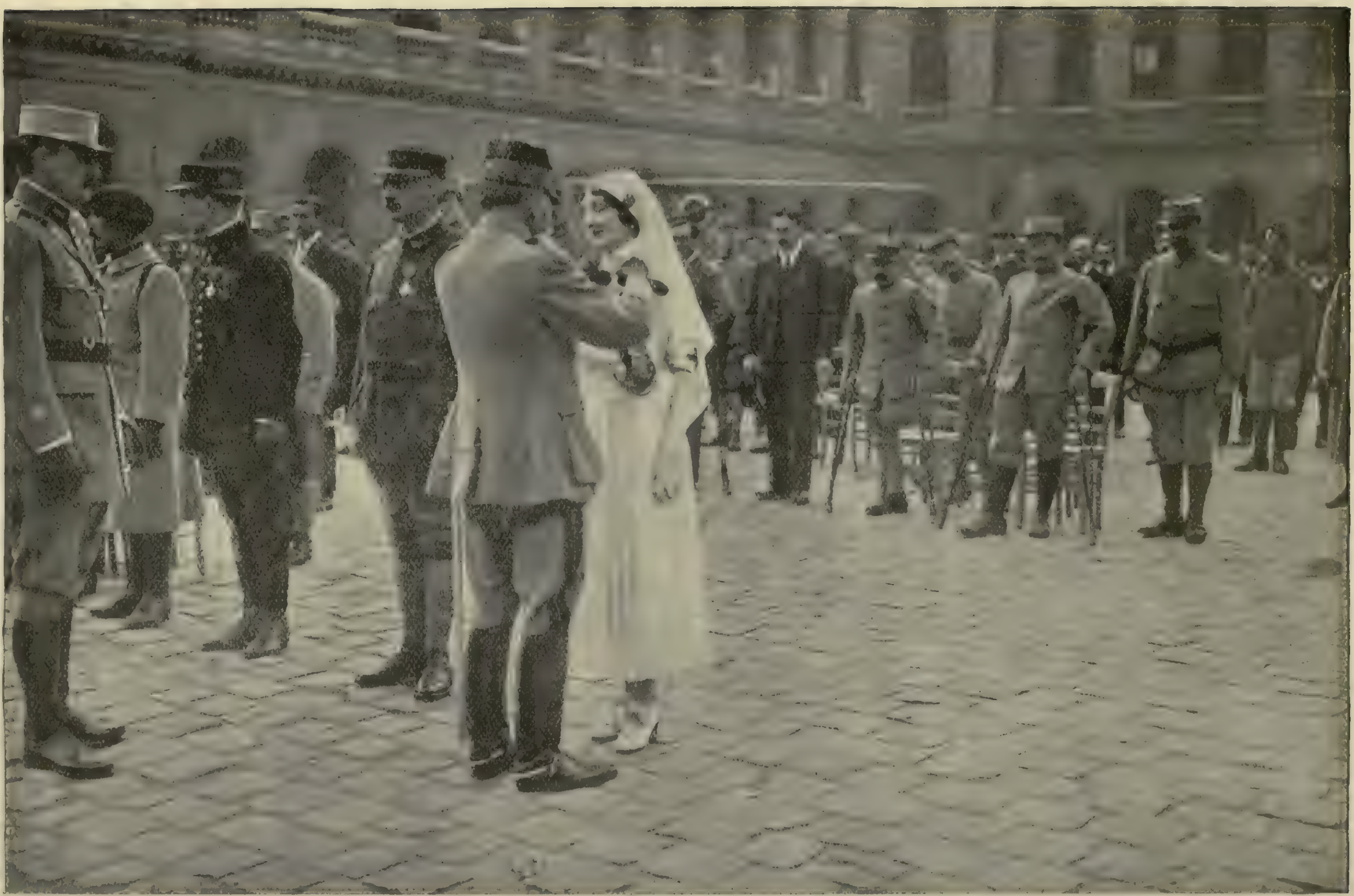
Though an N.C.O. in a Staffordshire regiment, Sergeant Carmichael was a Scotsman of Glenmavis, near Airdrie. Before enlisting he was employed at a quarry as a sett-maker. While his men were digging a trench they unearthed an unexploded bomb, the fuse of which started to burn. He ran to the spot, shouted to his men to get clear, and placing his steel helmet over the bomb, stood on it, and calmly waited for the explosion, which wounded him severely. He might have thrown the bomb out of the trench, but he saw that if he did so he would endanger the lives of the men working on the top. The only way to save his comrades was to risk his own life. This he did without a thought for himself.

SERGEANT FREDERICK HOBSON, Canadian Infantry.

During an enemy counter-attack a Lewis-gun team was holding a forward post in a communication trench leading to the enemy's lines. A shell which fell in the trench buried the gun and killed all the crew but one man. Sergeant Hobson, though not a gunner, saw clearly that the loss of the post would result in a grave disadvantage to us; so he rushed from his trench, dug out the gun, and managed to get it working just as the enemy began to advance across the open. In a few minutes the gun jammed. By this time he was wounded, but was still as full of fight as ever. He left the gunner to put the weapon to rights, and dashed forward against the advancing foe. He bayoneted several of them, and when he was in the thick of the fight clubbed his rifle and struck down several others. In this way he held back the attackers until one of them shot him dead. He had not died in vain. Before the enemy could reach the trench the Lewis gun was working again and reinforcements were arriving. The enemy was thrust back, and the attack was beaten off, thanks to the glorious valour and devotion of this gallant Canadian.

LANCE-SERGEANT JOHN MOYNEY and PRIVATE THOMAS WOODCOCK, Irish Guards.

Lance-Sergeant John Moyney was in command of fifteen men, including Private Woodcock, who were holding two advanced posts. The enemy swarmed round the posts, but the Irishmen had no thought of surrender. They had no water and but little food; nevertheless, for ninety-six hours they beat off every attack. On the morning of the fifth day a large number of the enemy attempted to dislodge them. The sergeant ordered his men out of their shell-holes, and attacked the advancing foe with bombs, while Private Woodcock with a Lewis gun played on them from a flank. He and his



A Brave French Woman decorated with the Legion of Honour.

(*French official picture.*)

Madame Maître, who is shown in the above picture receiving the Legion of Honour, had already received several decorations for her splendid services in nursing the wounded.

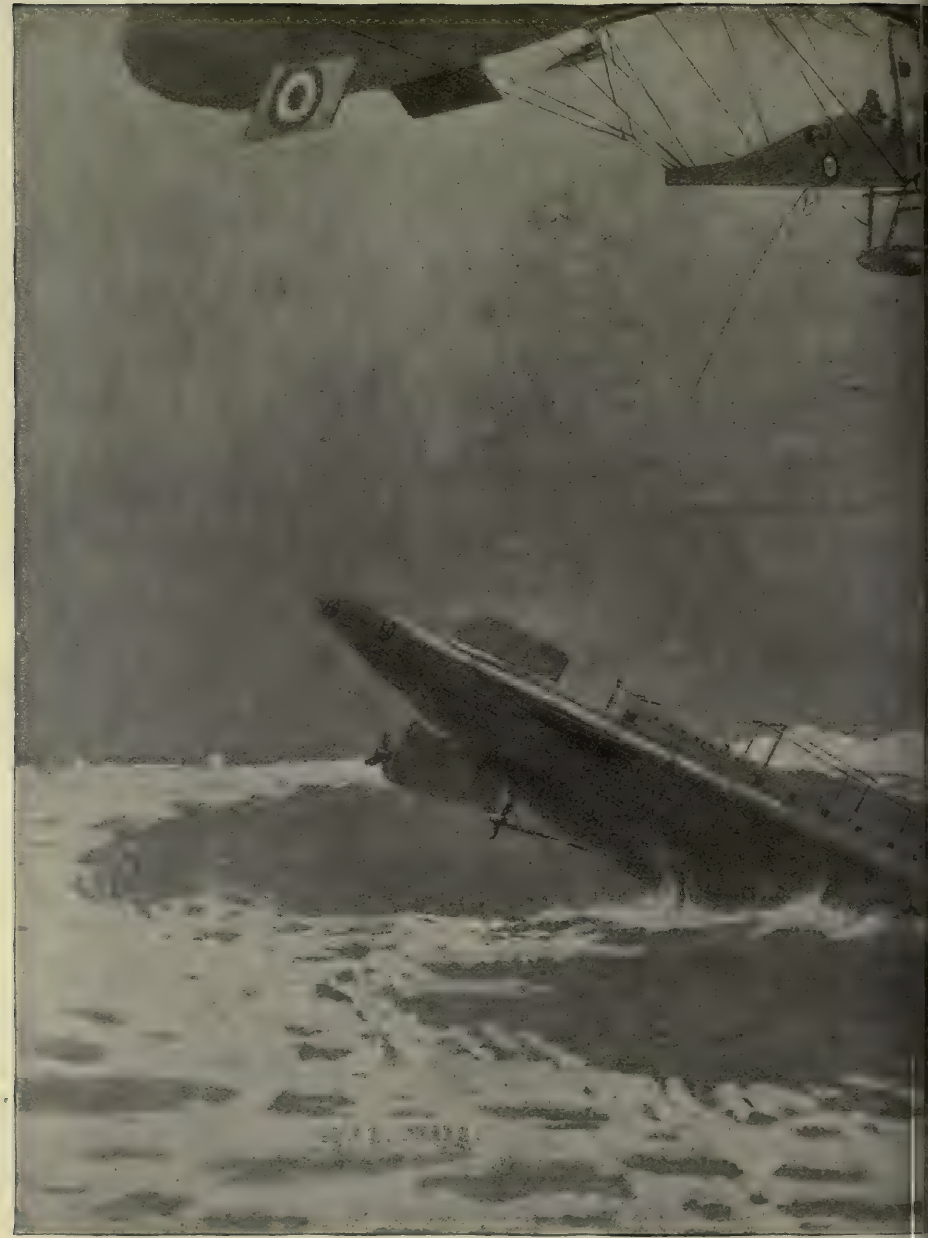
men were now surrounded by largely superior numbers, but still they refused to yield. They charged the enemy, broke through them, and reached the bank of a stream which lay between their abandoned posts and the main line. While the men crossed, Lance-Sergeant Moyney and Private Woodcock remained on the far side to cover their retirement. When all had reached the other bank and the enemy were only a few yards away, our two heroes turned and followed them amidst a shower of bombs, which, happily, did them no harm. Arrived on the far side, Woodcock heard cries for help from the other bank. At once he waded across the stream and rescued a wounded comrade. He carried him through the water and over open ground in broad daylight, in spite of heavy machine-gun fire. I am sure you will agree that both these intrepid men gloriously won the premier award of valour.

Corporal Sidney James Day, Suffolk Regiment.

In command of a bombing section, Corporal Day cleared a maze of trenches held by the enemy, and in doing so killed two machine gunners and took four prisoners. In the course of his advance he reached a point where the trench had been completely levelled by gun-fire. He went across this open ground alone, bombing his way to the left so as to gain touch with the neighbouring troops. Having done so, he returned to his section, and had hardly reached his comrades when an enemy bomb fell into a trench where there were two officers, one of them badly wounded, and three other men. Instantly he seized the bomb and flung it over the parapet, where it exploded harmlessly. This prompt action saved the lives of the officers and men. Then he continued his work of clearing the trench, and having disposed of all the Germans in it, pushed on to an advanced position, which he held for sixty-six hours, though all the time he was under fierce shell-fire and bursting bombs. " Throughout the whole operations," says the official report, " his conduct was an inspiration to all."

Lance-Corporal Frederick G. Room, Royal Irish Regiment.

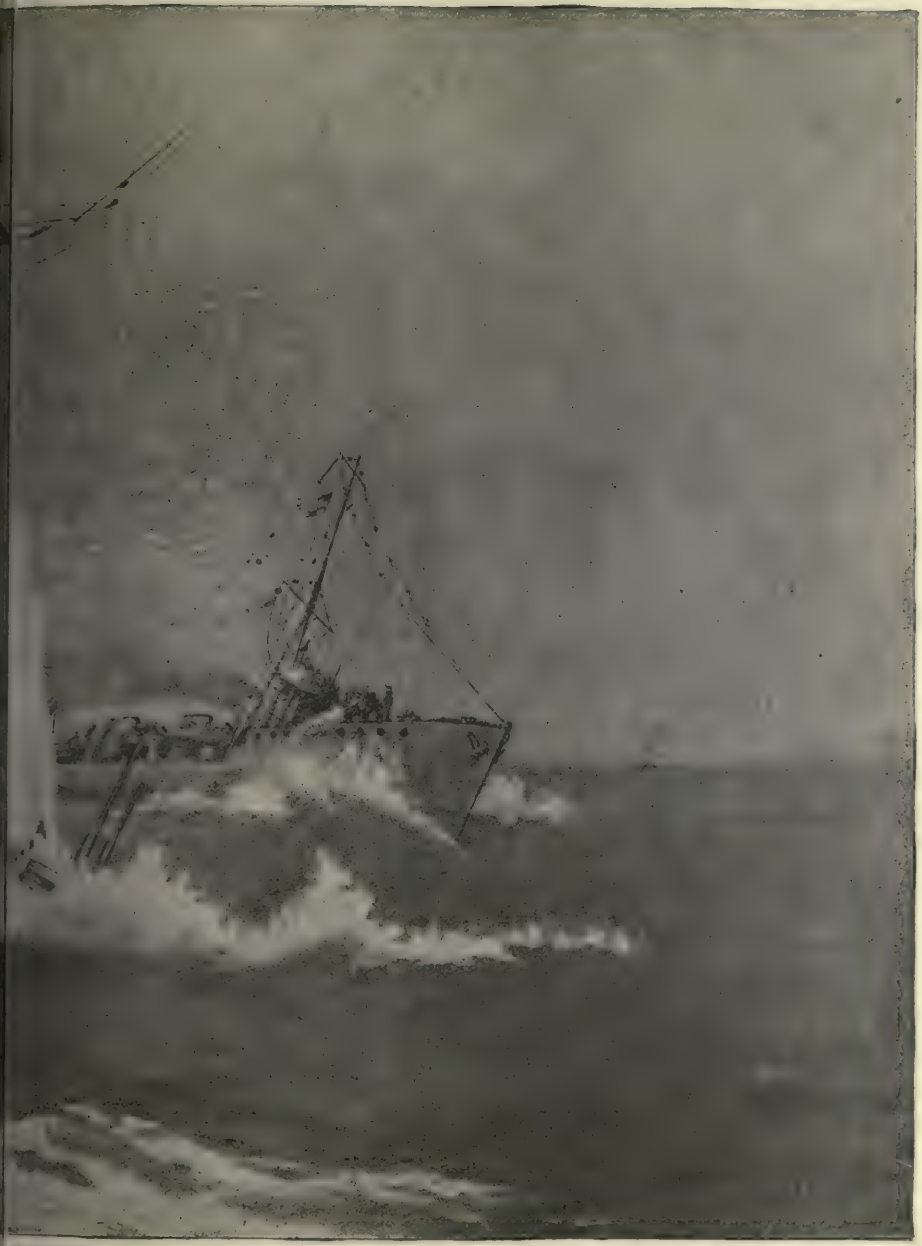
Lance-Corporal Room was in charge of the company stretcher-bearers on a day when many of his comrades who were holding a line of shell-holes and short trenches fell under the fire of enemy machine guns and of snipers. The corporal worked continuously under the heaviest fire, rendering first aid



British Destroyer si

(*From the drawing by Charles Pears*

“The ‘Blimp’ told the destroyer, and the destroyer did the rest.” In naval parlance a “b wireless apparatus has called up a destroyer, which has opened fire with fatal effect.



nemy Submarine.

ssion of The Illustrated London News.)

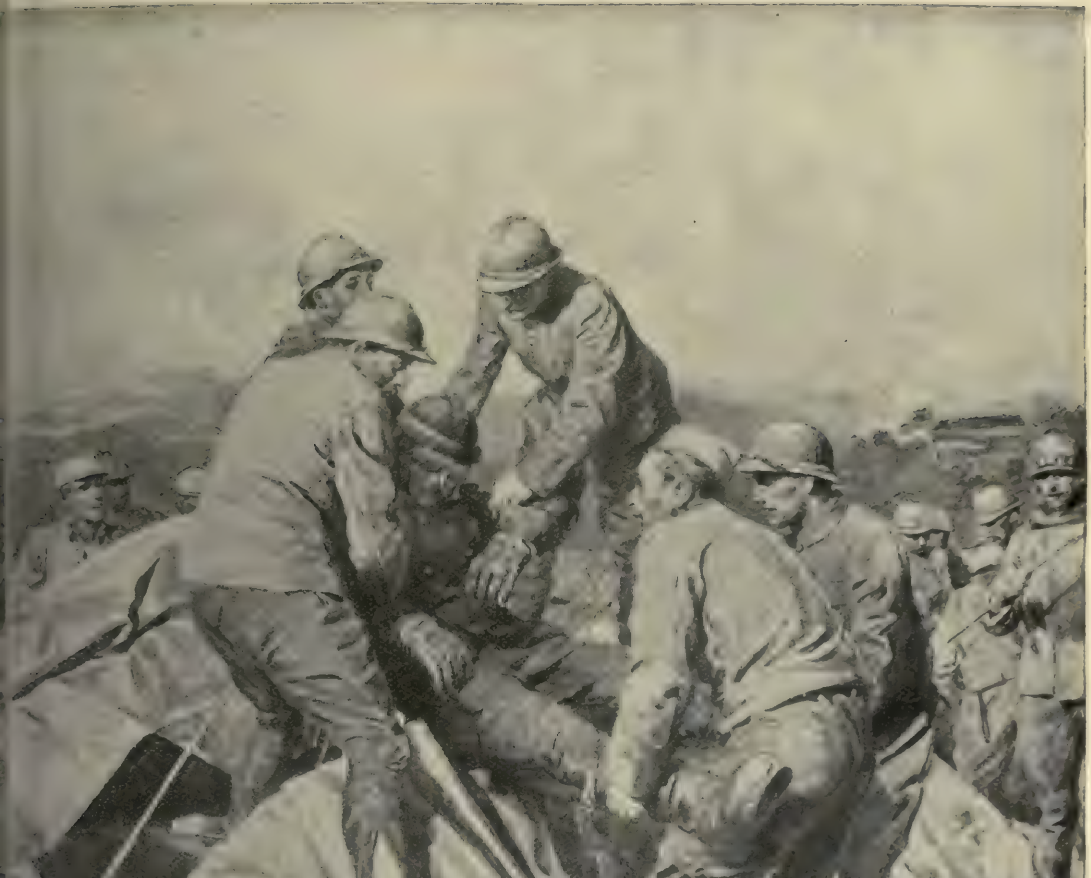
eaplane. The machine shown above has "spotted" a German submarine, and by means of her to the wounded and helping to get them to the rear. He was utterly fearless in this merciful work, and risked his own life a score of times. By his courage and devotion he saved the lives of many men who otherwise would have died on the battlefield.

PRIVATE HARRY BROWN, Canadian Infantry.

One small body of our men had captured an enemy position, and the Germans, determined to win it back, massed in force and attacked it furiously. A fierce struggle took place, and, overwhelmed by numbers, our troops were in grave peril. Unless reinforcements could be sent up speedily, it was clear that the position would be lost. The telephone wires were cut, and there was no means of communicating with the rear except by runners. Private Brown and another soldier immediately volunteered, and each of them received the message, with orders to deliver it at all costs. The two soldiers plunged into the barrage and disappeared. Brown's companion was killed, and he himself had his arm shattered before he had gone far. Nevertheless, he pushed on amidst the bursting shells and arrived at our support lines, where he found an officer. He was so worn out by fatigue and loss of blood that he fell down the steps of the dug-out in a fainting condition. He was just able to say, "Important message," and hand it over, when he swooned. He was carried to a dressing station, and a few hours later died. Thanks to the devotion of this gallant man, reinforcements were sent up in time and the threatened position was saved.

PRIVATE WILLIAM BOYNTON BUTLER, West Yorks Regiment.

Private Butler was in charge of a Stokes gun, which, as you know, fires shells in the form of bombs in very rapid succession. Suddenly one of the fly-off levers of a shell came off, and the fuse began to burn. Instantly he picked it up and jumped to the entrance of the emplacement, intending to throw it clear. At the moment, however, a party of infantry was passing by. He shouted to them to hurry past, as the shell was going off, and, turning round, placed himself between the infantry and the live shell until they were out of danger. He then threw the shell on to the parados, and took cover in the bottom of the trench. Instantly it exploded, greatly damaging the trench, but, happily, only bruising him. Undoubtedly his great presence of mind and disregard of danger saved many lives.



"Brought down." An enemy aviator being lifted from the remains of his machine.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

A German aeroplane flying over the French lines has been winged by anti-aircraft guns and compelled to land. His machine lies on the ground, a crumpled mass of wreckage, and he himself has been badly injured in the descent.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ITALIAN SUCCESS.

THE autumn of 1917 was a period of grievous disappointment to the Allies. While the British and French were striking heavy blows against the German line in the West, and were winning successes almost daily, the Russians, as you know, had put themselves out of action by their quarrels and jealousies, and their inability to set up a strong new government on the ruins of the old. By so doing they gave great advantages to their enemy, and made the task of their Allies harder than ever. The Germans had nothing to fear on the Russian front ; they were able to use it as a rest camp for their armies. So feeble was the Russian resistance that they were free to withdraw troops at their will for service elsewhere. We shall soon see that the breakdown of Russia enabled then to plan a great offensive against Italy, and achieve a success that for a time threatened to remove another of the Allies from the roll of fighting nations.

In the hour of success Italy suffered a grievous set-back of the most alarming character. Happily, when the outlook was darkest she was able to make a stand and hold off the forces that were trying to overwhelm her. Within a few days she lost all the fruits of two and a half years' hard fighting, and was forced back to the plains in hurried retreat with a loss of 250,000 men and 2,500 guns. The line of the Isonzo had to be abandoned, and the Italians were thrown back on a position that was by no means strong. In the middle of November men feared that much of Northern Italy would be overrun, and that Venice, Padua, Verona, and other beautiful and historic cities would have to be given up to the enemy. But the Italians made a splendid recovery at the very moment when all seemed lost, and at the end of November they were still holding out against fierce attacks on their front and left flank. Just as the Grand Duke Nicholas was able to save the bulk of his armies after the break-through on the Donajetz, so General Cadorna was able to withdraw by far the larger part of his forces to a position where a determined stand could be made. The peril of early September had almost passed by late November.

Before I tell you the moving story of the disaster, I must briefly recall to your minds the position of friend and foe on the Italian front. When Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary (May 25, 1915) her object was to capture the Trentino and the city of Trieste. Cadorna at once seized all the passes leading out of the Trentino salient and across the Carnic Alps. He also sent a strong force to the Upper Tagliamento river, to watch the pass through which runs the trunk railway connecting Vienna with the Trieste plain. As you know, the Austrians strove in June 1916 to reach the Upper Adige Valley, and were so far successful that they captured Asiago and Arsiero, and reached the edge of the plain. This was the high-water mark of their success. They were beaten back, and Italy was saved.

Along the mountain line which marks the northern frontier the Italians stood on the defensive. On the eastern frontier, as you know, they made repeated efforts to cross the Carso and reach Trieste. The zone of fighting stretched along the Isonzo river from Tolmino to the sea. While the Italians were engaged in the effort to force their way eastward, their left flank was exposed to an enemy attack. Cadorna believed that the forces with which he held the pass carrying the railway from Vienna were strong enough to resist any attempt to strike through by this route. He had, however, neglected to guard strongly the twenty-mile stretch north of the Bainsizza Plateau (see map on page 143). He had allowed the Austrians to establish strong bridgeheads on the western bank of the Upper Isonzo, and had made no real attempt to capture them. We shall see that this neglect proved his undoing.

Joy, however, came before sorrow, and success before disaster. Let me briefly describe a cheering victory which the Italians won in August 1917. So promising did it seem that throughout the peninsula men rejoiced greatly, and the church bells rang joyous peals. " They are ringing their bells now; they will be wringing their hands soon," said a British Prime Minister on a historic occasion. The same was soon to be true of the Italians.

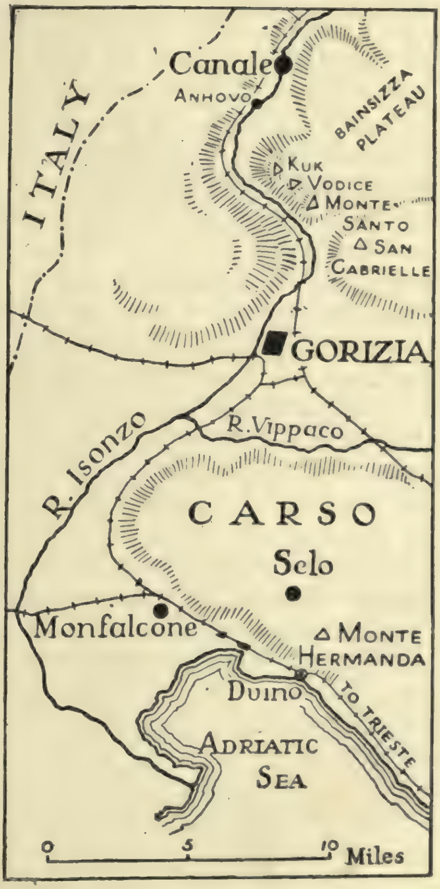
Turn to the map on page 143 and follow the course of the Isonzo. You notice that from Canale to Gorizia the river flows through a narrow gorge. On either bank the rocky walls rise to a height of 1,500 feet above the level of the water. On the eastern bank the river is hemmed in by the outer edge of what is known as the Bainsizza Plateau, or the Plain of the Holy Ghost. This plateau is bare and roadless, and not well supplied with water. To the south of Anhovo, along the western edge of the plateau, rise three heights—Kuk, Vodice, and Monte Santo; and across a deep gorge that runs far into the upland is the height known as San Gabriele, which dominates the town of Gorizia. The loftiest of these summits is Monte Santo, which overlooks all the lower country to the south and west. It stands like a sentinel watching the eastern plain of Venetia and the lowlands to the north and south of Gorizia. You can easily understand that if Monte Santo could be captured the Italians would possess an important coign of vantage.

In Chapter XXVIII. of our seventh volume I brought the story of the Italian campaign down to the end of June. Nothing of importance took place on the Isonzo front until the middle of August. At that time the Italians were well across the river at most places, and were facing the Austrian advanced positions on the western edge of the plateau. The main Austrian line lay along the rocky wall, from two to about six miles in rear of the advanced positions. Opposite the town of Anhovo the Austrian trenches were on the left bank of the stream. The heights of Kuk and Vodice were already in the hands of our ally.

On 18th August the Italians began an attack on the twenty-two mile front from Canale to the sea. To the extreme right wing was assigned the task of carrying the Bainsizza Plateau, while the extreme left wing was to make a bold bid for Hermada, the lofty stronghold which bars the way to Trieste. You have already heard of this fortified hill, which the Austrians had honeycombed with caverns blasted out of the hard limestone rock. It falls steeply to the sea, and its guns protect the railway and road which run along the coast. No Italian troops could possibly pass this way so long as Hermada remained in the hands of the Austrians.

The attack opened with a bombardment which was the fiercest that had been so far known on the Isonzo front. It lasted twenty-four hours, and before it ended the Austrian positions were utterly wrecked. Meanwhile British monitors lying off the coast hurled their shells on Hermada, and forced the defenders to take refuge in their dug-outs. When the order to advance was given the Italians pushed forward and occupied Selo, which you will see on the map to the north of Hermada, and advanced on the northern slopes of the mountain itself. A good success had been attained; but even greater and more important events were taking place to the north of Gorizia. Indeed, the attack on Hermada was only made to prevent the enemy from sending troops to the real scene of conflict further north.

During the night of the 18th and 19th August the Italians thrust fourteen pontoon bridges across the Isonzo, north of Anhovo. "The Isonzo at this particular point," writes a correspondent, "runs through a deep, wooded, and rocky gorge, and the stream is very deep and rapid. The Austrians had put a barrage of shell-fire all along this reach, because they thought that an attempt would be made to cross at this point. The Italians turned two powerful searchlights on the opposite bank where the enemy lay entrenched amongst the rocks and in a ruined village. Under


ITALY
Canale
ANHOVO
BAINSIZZA PLATEAU
KUK
VODICE
MONTE SANTO
SAN CABRIELLE
GORIZIA
R. Isonzo
R. Vippaco
CARSO
Selo
Monfalcone
MONTE HERMANDA
Duino
TO TRIESTE
ADRIATIC SEA
0
5
10 Miles

cover of the blinding light, the engineers succeeded in constructing a bridge." Over this and other bridges the infantry crossed, and seized the Austrian positions, which had been completely destroyed by the bombardment. Meanwhile, other troops had crossed above Canale. The whole ridge was captured, and an advance was made right on to the Bainsizza Plateau. Monte Santo was now outflanked, and on the 24th it fell. Monte Gabriele, however, still held out. It was very strongly fortified, and the Austrians defended it stubbornly.

The Italians had now gained a firm footing on the plateau, and all Italy rejoiced, hoping that Monte Gabriele would soon fall and that the road and railway leading from the Middle Isonzo to Trieste would soon be opened. Unfortunately Cadorna could not advance rapidly on the roadless plateau. Much work had to be done before the heavy artillery, the ammunition, and the necessary water could be brought up to the fighting line. Ten days went by, and then he ordered a direct attack to be made on Monte Gabriele, which he had hoped to outflank, and thus secure without an assault. The attack began on 1st September, and two days later the centre had reached its objectives. The wings, however, were held up, and a fierce fight continued for ten days. At the end of this time the wings had made no progress, and he was forced to withdraw. When he was checked his troops were on the northern slopes of the mountain. The fighting died down towards the end of September, by which time the Italians had captured 30,000 Austrians, 145 guns, and a great store of war booty. On the other hand, the Austrians claimed 20,000 Italian prisoners.

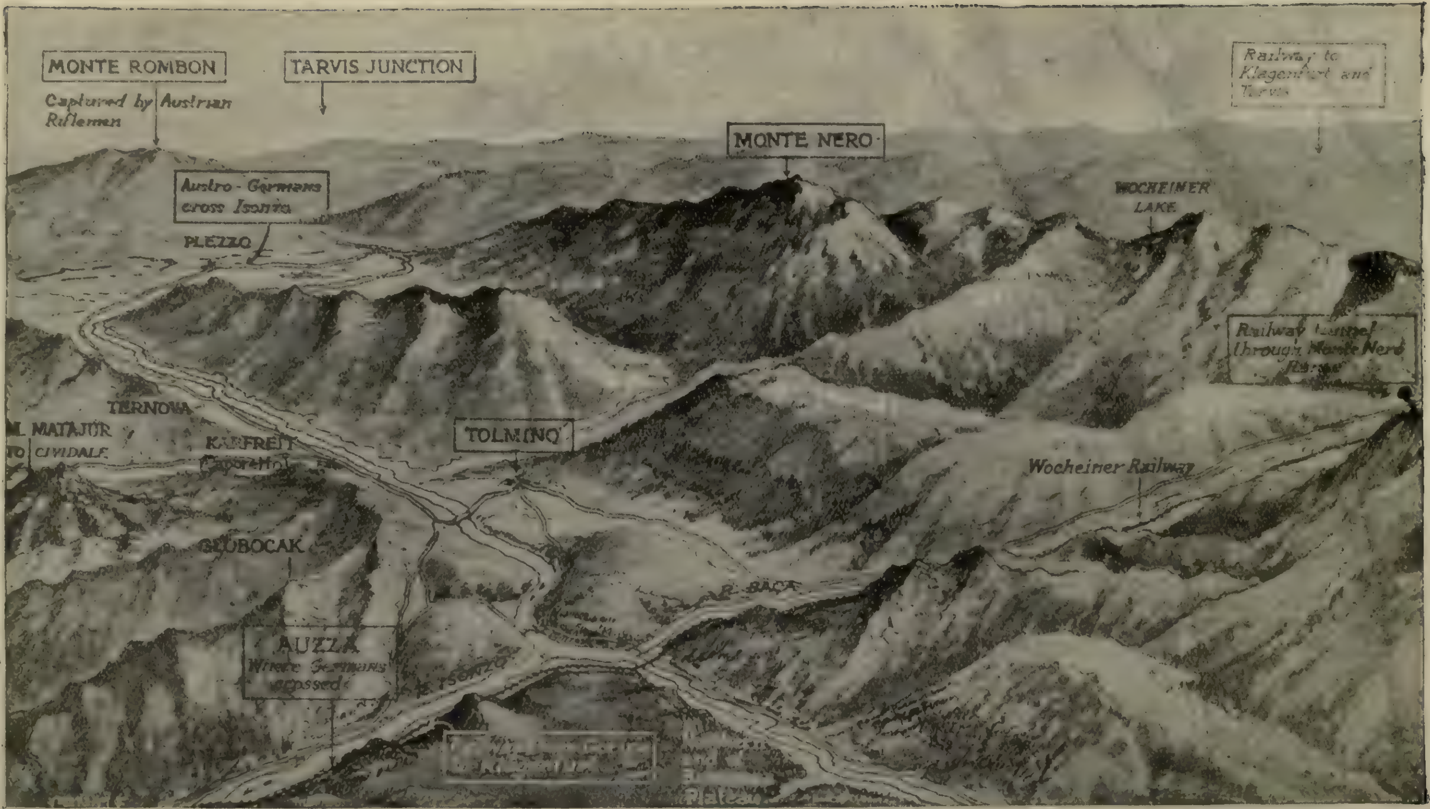
CHAPTER XIV.

DISASTER AND RECOVERY.

SO far, modified success had crowned the efforts of the Italians. We are now to hear how sudden disaster overtook them, and for a time threatened the complete destruction of their armies. There is no doubt that General Cadorna was caught napping. He had an inkling that vast forces were being massed against him on his left wing, at that part of his line where a break-through would be most dangerous ; but he made no special arrangements to meet the threat, and did not appeal to the Allies for assistance until the blow had fallen and ruin stared him in the face. He was confident that his men could hold the line against all comers, and it was this confidence, unhappily without foundation, which brought about his downfall.

You already know something of the German idea of warfare. The object of taking up arms is to defeat your enemy ; therefore, the Germans say, you are entitled to employ every means, good or bad, honest or dishonest, cruel or base, to accomplish your purpose. You may cheat, lie, break your word, torture prisoners, destroy innocent women and children, bribe, threaten, use poison and flame, and commit every crime in the calendar if thereby you are able to achieve victory. The end justifies the means. In the old days of knightly chivalry men would have scorned to sully their honour by such baseness. The creed of King Arthur's knights was—

"To reverence the king, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their king,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's."


MONTE ROMBON
Captured by Austrian Riflemen
TARVIS JUNCTION
Railway to Klagenfurt and Tarvis
MONTE NERO
Austro-Germans cross Isonzo
PLEZZO
WOCHEINER LAKE
Railway tunnel through Monte Nero Range
TERNOVA
M. MATAJUR
TO CIVIDALE
KARFREIT (Caporetto)
TOLMINO
Wocheiner Railway
GLOBOCAK
R. BACA
AUZZA
Where Germans crossed
R. ISONZO

A Bird's-eye View of the Mountain Region behind Tolmina through which the Austro-Germans made their Great Drive.

"The old true times are dead." The German ideal of war is to win by any means, however foul. The Kaiser and his friends did not, as you know, rely solely upon their armies to bring about the downfall of their enemies. They not only fought their foes with gun, rifle, and bayonet, but with lies and bribes as well. While their soldiers were engaged on the battlefield, their secret agents went to and fro amongst the peoples against whom they were warring, spreading false news, sowing seeds of distrust, making traitors wherever they could, scattering gold amongst those who thought more of money than of honour, and in a thousand ways sapping and undermining the determination of their foes. You already know how successful this underhand and treacherous kind of warfare had proved amongst the simple and ignorant Russian soldiery. The Russian armies were led astray by clever rogues, and before the end of the year 1917 men who had been corrupted by German lies and German gold gained control over the Government, and actually betrayed their Allies and suspended war with Germany.

Russia had been put out of action, not by the armies of Germany, but by her secret agents. Success having been won by these underground methods in the East, the German authorities now began a dark and secret campaign against the Italians. With deep cunning they set themselves to corrupt certain detachments which were holding the pass through which led the only easy road to the plain. Unhappily, as we shall see, they were successful; all that had been gained was lost, and for several weeks it seemed that North Italy would suffer the fate of Belgium and Rumania.

Examine the bird's-eye view on the opposite page: it shows you the whole Isonzo front from the Bainsizza Plateau to Plezzo. You already know that the main fighting had taken place between St. Lucia and the Adriatic. At St. Lucia the Austrians held a bridgehead on the Italian side of the river. Northward of St. Lucia, amidst the foothills of the Julian Alps, the hilly front was held by the Second Italian Army. In this part of the line the country was too difficult for either side to make an advance with any hope of success, so both sides stood on the defensive. Austrian guns woke the echoes from time to time, and Italian guns made reply; but beyond these exchanges of artillery there was no fighting for many months. The men of the Second Army had a very easy time, and, as Dr. Watts tells us,

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do."

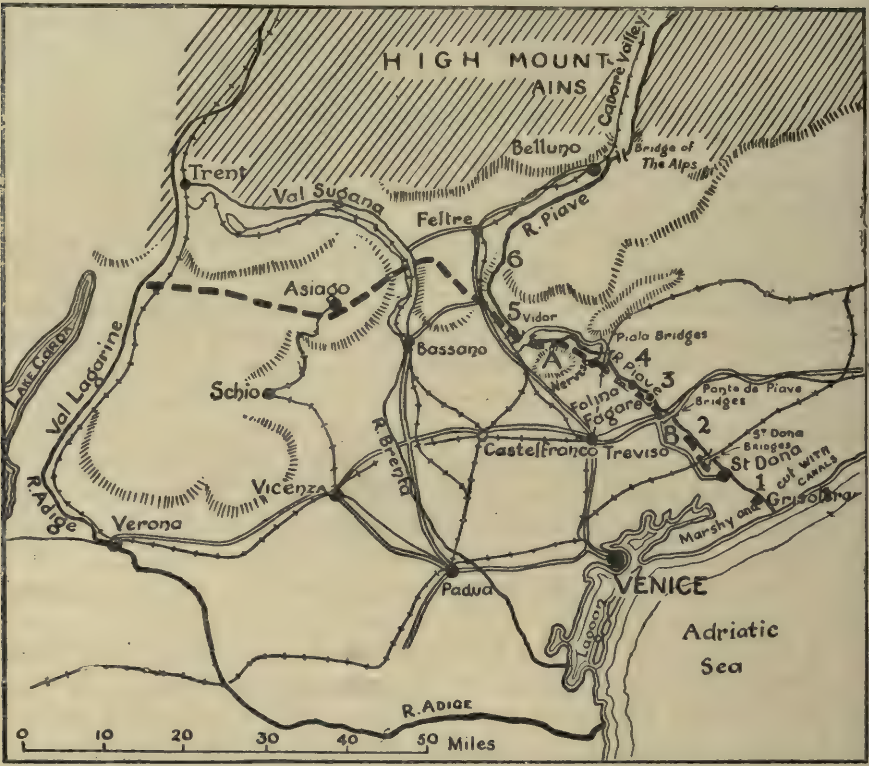
We have not been permitted to learn all that happened; but we know that German agents in Italian uniforms, speaking Italian like natives, managed to mingle with the Italian soldiers on this quiet part of the front, and put all sorts of doubts and distrusts into their minds. With ready lies and oily tongues and plentiful gold they persuaded certain detachments holding the gateway to the plain that Codlin was their friend, not Short; that Great Britain was waging the war for her own interests, and that Italy had nothing to gain and much to lose by continuing to fight. The Kaiser, they said, would not be hard upon their country if it submitted. The consequence was that the loyalty of some of the Italian soldiers was sapped, their resolution was undermined, and they were ready to play the traitors' part. At this time there was much unrest in Italy; a change of government was taking place, and the people were much divided by political strife.

Before I pass on I want you to notice that the underhand methods employed by the Germans can only succeed in a country where many of the people are ignorant and unlettered. Such people have not been trained to reason, and they are easily carried away by a clever talker with a smooth and persuasive tongue. Men who have been taught to read books and to think about what they read are far more likely to be proof against such assaults than those who are ignorant. German agents in Britain, France, and the United States, where the people are more or less educated, could never lead large numbers astray. But in Russia, where three-fourths of the people are grossly ignorant, and in Italy, where nearly half the people cannot read or write, they find a fruitful soil in which to sow their poisonous seeds. The war has taught us that education is the foundation of loyalty and the best bulwark against treachery.

Very secretly corps of Germans, many of them drawn from the Russian front, were massed behind the huge bulk of Monte Nero, for an attack on the quiet and not too well guarded part of the line north of the Bainsizza Plateau. You will remember that this flank had always been the weak place in Cadorna's defence. The enemy knew exactly where the Italian line would give way. German prisoners afterwards said that their officers had promised that they would be in Italy in two days. It was also reported that the Austrian Emperor had announced some time previously that Italy was about to be invaded, and that an early peace would follow.

The fateful day was 24th October. At 2 a.m. on that day the enemy began a furious bombardment all the way from San Gabriele to Plezzo, with the exception of the one particular sector which was held by the disaffected Italians. For two hours massed guns hurled gas and tear shells upon our Allies, until a dense wall of poison gas arose, and the whole countryside was so thickly shrouded in mist that it was impossible to see what was taking place. On the Bainsizza Plateau, where the Italians had not been able to excavate dugouts, they suffered terribly. Elsewhere they lay in their shelters, and trusted to their gas masks. On one piece of ground about two hundred yards long a gas shell fell and burst every fifteen seconds.

Look again at the bird's-eye view on page 146, and find Caporetto, which stands on the Isonzo, between St. Lucia and Plezzo. From Caporetto a fine broad road runs southward to Cividale, and then south-westward to Udine, the chief railway centre of the Friuli plain. It was by this route, which would give them an open door to the only easy pass through the mountains, that the Germans meant to advance. In the small hours of Wednesday morning three picked bodies, each of two divisions, and all Germans, struck three blows—the first from the bridgehead at St. Lucia, the second opposite Caporetto, and the third at Plezzo. The decisive attack was that which was made from St. Lucia. It cut off the Second Army from the Third, and prevented any interference with the crossing at Caporetto, where the disaffected Italians made only a show of resistance. Through a gap in the ring of fire and gas a German army corps passed, and before they knew it the defenders of the adjoining positions were being cut off and outflanked. At daybreak on Thursday, the 25th, about twenty-eight hours after the first blow had fallen, the ridges which rise up on either side of the Caporetto-Udine road were captured; the centre of the Italian Second Army was completely broken, and the Germans


HIGH MOUNTAINS
Cadore Valley
Belluno
Bridge of The Alps
Trent
Val Sugana
Feltre
R. Piave
6
Asiago
5 Vidor
Piola Bridges
A
Nervesa
4
R. Piave
3
Ponte de Piave Bridges
Bassano
Lake Garda
Val Lagarine
Schio
Folina
Fagare
2
B
St Dona Bridges
St Dona
1
Grisolera
cut with canals
Marshy and
R. Brenta
Castelfranco
Treviso
R. Adige
Verona
Vicenza
Padua
VENICE
Lagoon
Adriatic Sea
R. Adige
0 10 20 30 40 50 Miles

were sweeping along the easy road to Cividale, the first town of the Friuli plain.

You must not suppose that the Germans had an easy victory all along the line. The troops on the Bainsizza Plateau made a very strong resistance, and the gallant Alpini held on to Monte Nero for three days. During this time they were without food save for a few loaves dropped from an aeroplane. Most of the Italians fought magnificently, and many refused to retreat.

A glance at the above map shows you clearly that the Third Army was now in a very perilous plight. If it delayed to retire it would find the enemy in its rear, and nothing could then save it from destruction. It had to fall back with all speed to the only line where it could possibly make a stand—the line of the river Tagliamento, some twenty to forty miles to the west. There was only one good road and one railway by which it could retreat. All the guns and the wheeled traffic of the Third Army had to travel either by rail or by a single road.

You can easily imagine the awful scenes of confusion that followed. A correspondent thus wrote :—

> "You must remember that the Italians have been called upon at an instant's notice to snatch back to a distance of forty miles over a million men from positions which they have held for more than two years ; that the line which they had suddenly to abandon lay almost entirely among most difficult mountains approached by steep and twisting roads ; that in the course of their retreat they had to cross several rivers ; that only three bridges spanned the Tagliamento, behind which alone they could make a stand, and that upon three bridges all this vast mass of men and material had to converge.
>
> "Add to all this that some Italian troops failed in their duty, and abandoned their positions, thus opening a gap in the defences through which the enemy poured like water through a broken dyke. Imagine, too, the civilian population of a whole province suddenly and unexpectedly faced with invasion, and forced to flee before the enemy, leaving everything behind them. Try to realize all this, and you will no more expect the retreat to have been carried out without confusion than you would expect the Crystal Palace to fall down without splintering.
>
> "The Italian General Staff had reckoned that under ordinary conditions a full month would be required for the withdrawal. As it was, they had to do it in three days. . . . When the Second Army was forced to retire it exposed the flank of the Third Army, which lay to the south of it along the Carso front. It was necessary that the Third Army should also withdraw, or else be cut off and surrounded. General Cadorna accordingly gave the order for its retirement ; but it was not until eleven o'clock on the night of Saturday that the infantry of this army left their trenches. In the absence of transport, the men themselves manned the drag ropes of the guns and hauled them from their rocky emplacements on the Carso to safety behind the Tagliamento river.
>
> "The heavier guns could not be shifted in this way, and some had to be abandoned. Before they left them, however, the Italians disabled them, and there the smashed cannon will remain on the stony desert of the Carso as a monument of the great war for many years to come. It was not until the enemy was engaged with the Italian rearguard on the Torre river, only three or four miles east of Udine, that the outflanked Italians on the Carso withdrew. Had their retirement been delayed for a single hour longer, they would have fallen into the enemy's hands without hope of escape.
>
> "The Italians have lost not only the ground which they had won in two and a half years of war, but the rich province of Friuli as well."

Happily the British guns on this front were got away safely, though the gunners suffered some few casualties from the bombs dropped near them by Austrian airmen. In spite of the terrible disappointment, our men were cheery and full of spirit. It is said that the Third Army used *camouflage* * with excellent

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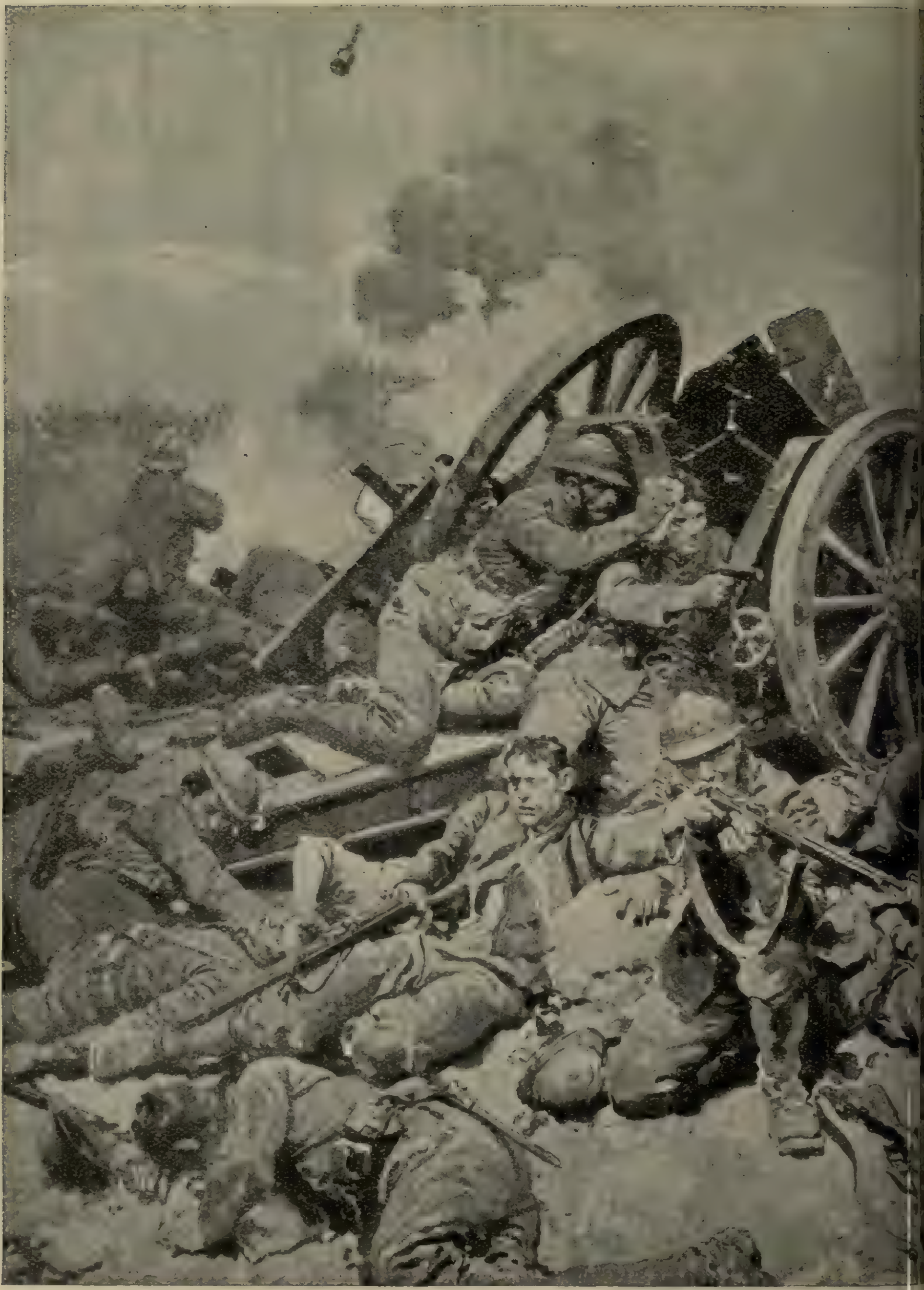
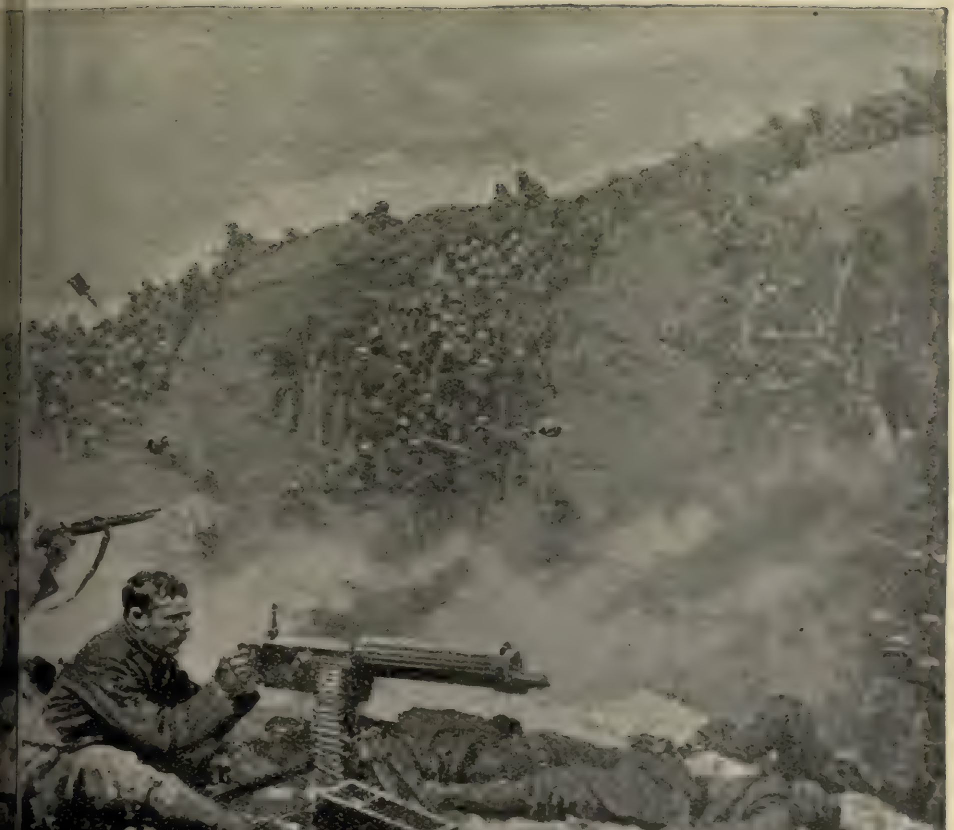
* A French term which at first meant "concealing in smoke"—a practice, as you know, of the Navy. Now the word means the concealment of any object by artificial means.



Italian Artillerymen fighting round their Guns until overwhelm

(From the picture by F. Matan



b the Oncoming Rush of the Austro-German Hordes.
permission of The Sphere.)

effect during the retreat. Matting was stuck up on poles by the sides of the road, and strips of the same material were stretched above the road so as to prevent the German airmen from seeing what was going on below.

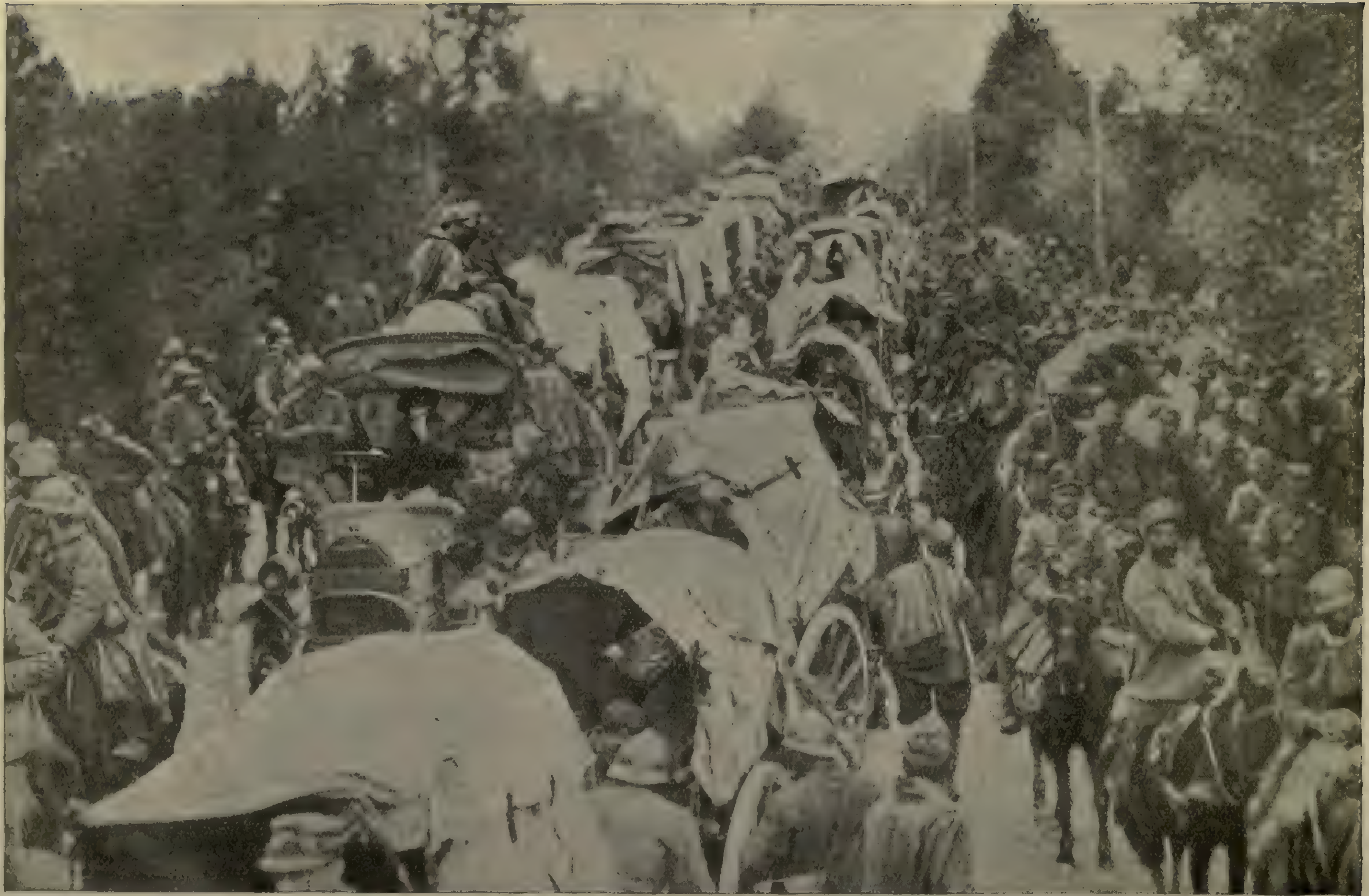
Try to realize the awful change which had suddenly been brought about by the German break-through. On the morning of 24th October the Italian army was a highly-organized fighting force, deeply entrenched, with thousands of guns of every kind. Behind it were three thousand five hundred miles of new roads, along which a ceaseless stream of traffic passed to and fro. Bridges, railways, cable-ways, wells, aqueducts, whole towns of huts had been built during thirty months of hard work. In as many hours the Italian army was forced to abandon all the results of its labour, valour, and sacrifices for two and a half years. It had to depart with the utmost speed or be cut off. There was no time for orderly retirement. All the troops, as many of the heavy guns as could be saved, and myriads of wagons, carts, ambulances, and motor lorries had to get away as rapidly as they could. What could not be moved at once had to be destroyed. Oh, the pity of it!

Streams of fugitives poured along the roads. There were women with children in their arms, and others weeping because they had lost their children in the confusion. There were wounded; there were old people and sick, who were carried in the arms of their relatives. The roads were choked with every kind of vehicle. Some of the people pushed handcarts laden with their household treasures; others stumbled along beneath big bundles; while others, again, urged forward a laden donkey or mule. Tired, sodden troops pushed their way through the crowds of fugitives, which crawled slowly along the densely-crowded roads. A correspondent tells us that he saw amongst the fugitives a man in full evening dress and a lady in white ball slippers. Several other women carried immense cardboard boxes containing their finery. It was a tragic and distressing sight.

During the first four days of the battle the Germans claimed to have captured 100,000 Italians and 700 guns. On 27th October enemy troops occupied Gorizia, while others reached Cividale, on the outskirts of the Venetian plain. It was on this day that the Third Army began to retire towards the Tagliamento. Von Below, who was in command of the Germans, sent his cavalry against the retreating Italians, and pushed forward his infantry with the utmost speed. It was a race between his troops and those of the Third Italian Army. If von Below could reach the Tagliamento before the Third Army could dig itself in along its banks, a further retreat would be necessary. On 29th October Udine, which had been General Cadorna's headquarters for two years, fell into the enemy's hands. By the evening of the 30th the number of prisoners had increased to 120,000, and more than 1,000 guns had been captured.

The Duke of Aosta succeeded in bringing the Third Army intact to its new position behind the Tagliamento. He had to make a rearward march of nearly forty miles on a fifteen-mile front, and he had to do it before von Below could outflank him and force him to surrender. By bringing away his troops in time and in good order he baffled this plan and saved his army. Desperate rearguard actions were fought in order to delay the enemy, and in these fights the Italian cavalry greatly distinguished itself. On 31st October von Below's army reached the left bank of the Tagliamento. The river was in furious torrent, the bridges had been destroyed, and the Italians were holding bridgeheads covering the passages. The bridgeheads, however, were stormed and captured by German troops; and lower down the river an Austrian corps cut off 60,000 Italians, who were forced to lay down their arms.

The remainder of the rearguards crossed to the right bank of the river, where they rallied and made a stand until 4th November. On that day the enemy crossed the river to the north of the Udine road. The Third Army, with what remained of the Second, was now forced to fall back to a parallel river, the Livenza, from fifteen to twenty miles in the rear of the Tagliamento. The Livenza, however, was even a poorer obstacle than the Tagliamento. On 6th November the enemy's advance guards reached its left bank by means of the broad highway which they had followed all the way from Caporetto. Next day another disaster befell the Italians. A German division advancing in the open country north of Udine got behind an Italian division which had clung too long to the Upper Tagliamento, and captured 17,000 prisoners. On the same day Austrian troops crossed the Livenza, and the whole Italian line fell back on the river Piave, some ten miles to the west.



On one of the roads leading to the Lower Isonzo. The Third Army retiring.

(*Italian Official Photograph.*)

By this time the number of prisoners had reached 250,000, and 2,300 guns had been captured. The Italians had now lost three times as many men and four times as many guns as the French at Sedan. They had, however, reached a line on which a stand could be made. The disaster had one very good effect. The Italians immediately laid aside their quarrels, and all parties united to avert the grave peril which threatened their country.

Turn to the map on page 150, and follow the course of the Piave. It rises as a mountain torrent amidst the fantastic and many-coloured peaks of the Dolomites, in the district known as Cadore. Travellers gliding in gondolas on the open lagoons of Venice can see these mountains rising range behind range into the clear blue sky. In times of peace Cadore is much visited by tourists, not only because of its remarkable mountain scenery, but because of its historic associations. The Romans occupied the district for five hundred years, and the remains of their military roads, castles, forts, and bridges may still be seen. Livy, the Roman historian, was born within sight of the Dolomites, and the great painter Leonardo da Vinci first drew breath in the Cadore. The forests of this region are very valuable. It is said that sixty thousand trees are felled every year in the district. Most of the trees are cut into logs and deals, which are then formed into rafts, and floated down the Piave to the Adriatic, where steamers take them in tow to Venice.

From its source to the Bridge of the Alps, above Belluno, the Piave is not a serious obstacle. Below Belluno the river runs through country which is either flat or tumbled by the last foothills of the Alps. It soon becomes a considerable stream, but, like all mountain rivers, is very low in the dry season. If you look at the map on page 150, you will see that the river makes a wide bend to the eastward after passing the village of Nervesa. From this point to St. Dona, a distance of about twenty miles, the Piave runs through the plain. Between Nervesa and the point marked D the river is easily crossed, but between D and St. Dona it is fairly deep, with difficult, muddy banks. Between St. Dona and the sea are marshy meadows, cut up by many canals, which merge into the meres and lagoons of the coast. The weak part of the line of the Piave lies between the points marked D and A.

Our map on page 150 shows the line upon which General Cadorna chose to make his stand. You see that it follows the river to the north of Vidor, then strikes north-west, and finally turns westward to follow the ridge watershed of the river Brenta. Beyond the Val Sugana, which figured in the great Austrian advance of May 1915, is the little town of Asiago, also familiar to you as the scene of much fierce fighting. Cadorna's line rested in the west on the river Adige. His line had thus a river front on the east and a mountain wall on the north. Happily the line was well served with railways ; but when all was said and done it was of no great strength, and should it be turned the Italians would be forced to retreat to the line of the Adige, and give up Venetia, the pride and glory of Italy. You will observe that the line covered the glorious old cities of Venice, Padua, and Verona, with their treasures of architecture, painting, and historic association. Venice was but fifteen miles from the lower course of the Piave, and its lovers, who are counted by the thousand in every civilized nation on earth, trembled lest it should be ruined by the Austrian howitzers.

Cadorna was relieved of his command on 8th November, and General Diaz became Commander-in-Chief. Two days later a new peril appeared. An Austro-Hungarian force moved down the Val Sugana, and, after desperate fighting, occupied Asiago, which had now changed hands for the third time during the war. Other Austrian troops descended the Cadore valley and captured Belluno. Meanwhile, on the same day, von Below's advance guards reached the Middle and Lower Piave. The Piave line was now threatened both on the river front and on the mountain front. A frontal thrust was soon to be made along the Piave, and two attempts to break through by way of the Brenta watershed were already in progress. Should either of these thrusts succeed, the Italians would be forced back to the Adige, and would probably suffer greatly in their withdrawal for more than sixty miles.

By this time the army had recovered its old spirit, and was fighting with all its old courage and devotion. The Allies were sending help ; British and French troops were being dispatched to Italy with all speed. The Italians, however, had lost over two thousand guns, and these could not readily be replaced.

Their misfortunes were not yet over. On 11th November some 10,000 of them who had been driven from the mountains tried to escape down the Piave, but were cut off and compelled to lay down their arms. Early next morning the Austrians put a strong barrage over the bend of the river at Zenson, fifteen miles from its mouth, threw across pontoons, and, reaching the right bank, established a bridgehead, from which, however, they were ultimately driven off, though they still remained on the Italian side of the water. The pressure on the mountain front increased, and slowly but surely the Italians were driven from the positions on the ridge towards the lower slopes leading down to the plain.

They had, however, some success on the 15th, when the Austrians made an attempt to force the line of the river in the section between St. Dona and Nervesa. Two regiments—the one at Fagare, and the other at Folina—made a cunning attempt to get across. At Folina the water on the Austrian side is deep, while near the Italian bank it is shallow enough for wading. In the middle of the stream are sandbanks, to which, under cover of the darkness, the Austrians ferried the first detachment of their attacking party.

At dawn Italian Bersaglieri, who were holding the river bank at Folina, were surprised to see several score of Austrians wading towards them from the sandbanks with their hands uplifted. It looked like a wholesale surrender. Could it be that the Austrians, disappointed that the Italians had not made the promised peace, were ready to desert? While the Italians wondered, their colonel noticed behind this leading party another detachment with rifles and machine guns. Immediately he gave an order, and a hail of lead swept down upon the treacherous attackers, who were clearly outlined against the gleaming waters of the stream. Three hundred of them who managed to return to their sandbank were caught by the Italian guns, and later on were captured. From them it was learned that the leading Austrians who had pretended to surrender were a strong bombing party with their pockets filled with grenades.

A similar enterprise lower down the river at Fagare was more successful. Several hundred Bavarians succeeded in getting across, and, once on the Italian side, were very difficult to detect amidst the flat fields and ditches. As soon, however, as they were "spotted" they were checked. These frontal attacks were not the main effort of the enemy. That was being made between the upper course of the Piave and the Brenta, where it was hoped that the Italian front would be pierced and the line of the river would be turned. Usually by the middle of November this mountain country is inches deep in snow. The season, however, was very open, and the slight falls of snow were not sufficient to prevent the enemy from moving his guns from one position to the other. The Germans had their usual luck with regard to the weather.

The numbers on the map, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, show you the points at which the enemy tried to cross the river towards the end of November. You already know that he had gained a footing on the Italian bank at the Zenson bend of the river (3), and that parties had crossed at 2, and had been driven back. I must now tell you what took place at the Grisolera, five miles from the sea. For the last ten or eleven miles of the Piave, between St. Dona and the sea, the river runs between twelve-foot dykes. Between the present course of the river and its old course lies a belt of marsh much cut up by canals and ditches of all kinds. After the rain which had fallen during the retreat this district was almost impassable. On 16th November strong patrols of Hungarians, by means of a lavish use of machine guns, managed to cross the new course of the river and push forward towards the maze of marshes, dykes, and lagoons behind the old course of the stream. The Italians on this part of the line, after losing about one thousand prisoners, fell back in good order to the west and north. Reinforced by some Alpini, who had now left their native mountains for the sea coast, they attacked the invaders, and killed most of them. So far the river front had only been pierced at one point.

CHAPTER XV.

A STOUT STAND.

THE Italians by this time had recovered their spirits, had reorganized their army, and were busily engaged in strengthening their new position. As you know, they were now being assailed on the river front and on the mountain flank. Here is a picture of the river as seen by a correspondent:—

"The river Piave, itself level and gray, stretches more like a desert than a river before you. Even when you look over its bank in the central portions of the stream no sign of the enemy can be obtained. There is only the quiet, villa-dotted countryside, from which shells come screaming over and burst with black clouds on bare stretches of the river bank, or in the lovely towns and villages just behind. There is a villa entirely decorated by Paul Veronese * waiting in one spot to be destroyed by the gunners of Austro-Germany."

Though most of the attacks on the river front had been checked, and even, as at the Zenson bend on the 17th, driven back with a loss of 1,200 prisoners, the enemy was making headway on the mountain front. On Sunday, 18th November, the Italians lost the village of Quero, at the point where the mountain defences touch the Piave, and were obliged to fall back on Monte Tomba, the last strong point before reaching the plain. The line, however, was still holding at the end of the first week of December. The Italians were resisting magnificently, and though fresh and probably still stronger attacks were to be expected, there was now no great fear of a further disaster, though it was generally recognized that a determined

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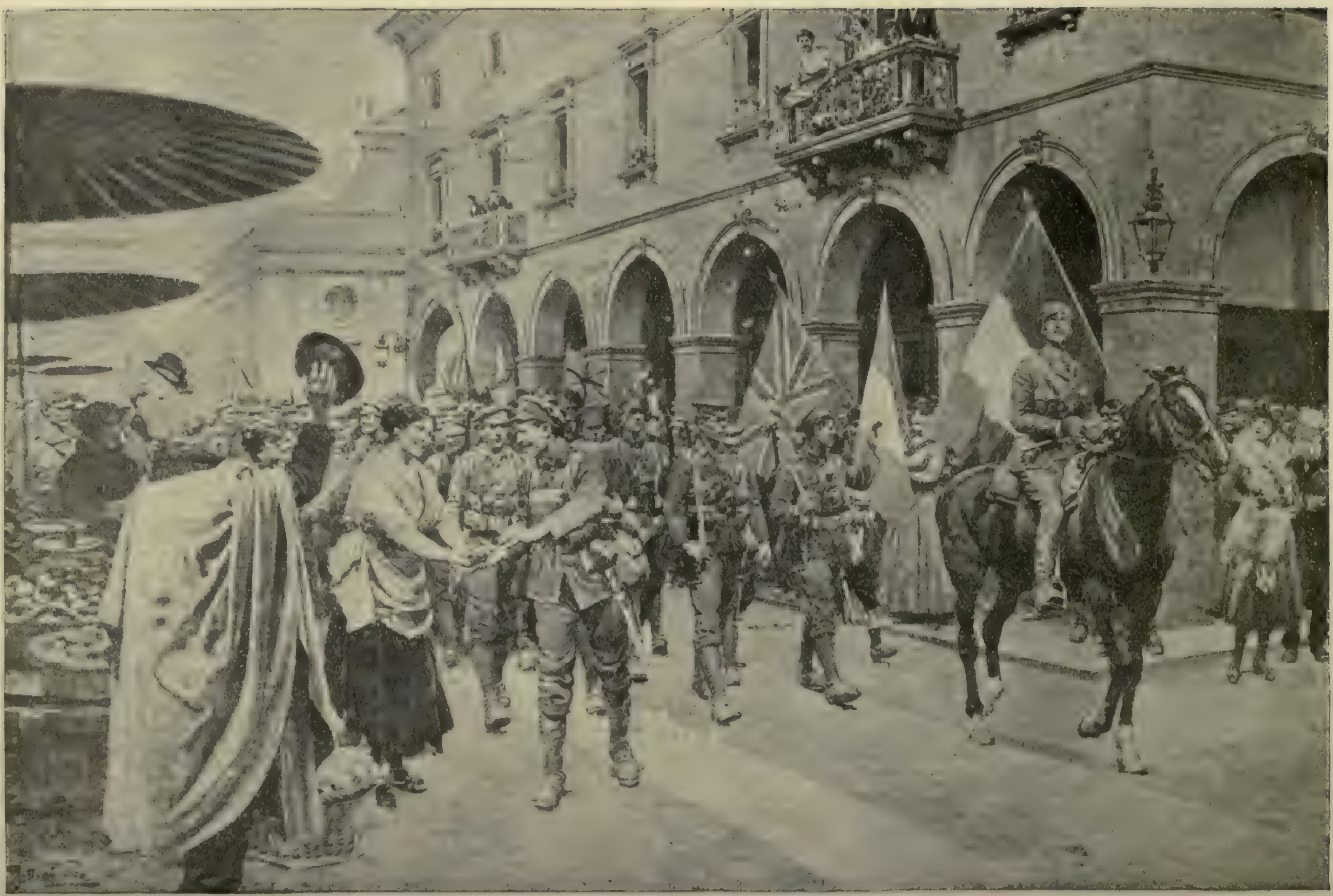
* Venetian painter (1522–88), one of the greatest of all colourists. His *Family of Darius before Alexander* is in the National Gallery.



British Troops passing through a town of North Italy.

(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

advance of the Austro-Germans might force the Italians to retire to the Adige. A correspondent says :—

"On Saturday, 24th November, I met one of the battalions which in hastily built trenches had resisted awful artillery fire and wave after wave of infantry attack on Monte Tomba, and had by means of a counter-attack won back a portion of the crest of the mountain which had been wrenched from them. They were exhausted men, but they knew what they had done, and they were proud of it. They did not know how they had resisted, or how they had escaped alive. I suppose they had not thought of anything but the order to hold on. For nearly a month they had slept in the open, with only one blanket apiece. The rain had beaten on them, and the frost had chilled them. When they were not fighting they were digging, and hot food reached them only once a day at best. But they held on—and they took a great toll of the enemy infantry."

Von Below, you will remember, had failed to carry Monte Tomba, against which he had sent his best troops. He poured out Prussian and Pomeranian blood like water, but was unable to rush the Italian defences. He was reinforced, and again, on 26th November, strove to break through with mixed Austrian and German forces. He tried to push down the Brenta gorge, across a *col* of 5,000 feet elevation lying to the east, and over Monte Grappa.

"The Prussians who followed their shells down the Brenta gorge went forward easily enough till they reached the point where the valley suddenly widens. There they met the blast of Italian machine guns, and were stopped as though at a dead wall. Three times they were withdrawn to shelter while their guns searched afresh for our emplacements, and three times they were sent forward again, always with the same result.

"A number of them, led by a lieutenant, who managed to crawl beyond the deadline of the machine-gun fire along the stones that litter the riverside, were observed, and forced to take to the water by the riflemen above the road. The rapid waters of the Brenta swept them away, and the torrent hustled them, drenched and frozen, into captivity. Above, on the mountain front, the same thing happened. Attack after attack was beaten back by our machine guns.

"His next attack was upon the Col della Berretta. The fine flower of the Austrian mountain troops was brought up—men of the famous Edelweiss Division, who wear for a badge a specimen of that flower. A truly frightful bombardment was directed against the defenders' lines, and a barrage was thrown behind; then the whole Edelweiss Division advanced.

"There was a moment when the situation was grave for the Italians. The Alpini and infantry who held the line were terribly outnumbered, and from the first moment their communications with the rear were broken—telephone wires cut into short lengths by shells, signallers shot down as they tried to speak with flags, and runners who started but were never

> heard of again—and there were also a certain number of gas shells beginning to flavour the incessant bombardment.
>
> "Out of that darkness the Edelweiss came pressing up, taking their places for the final rush, getting their machine guns into position, and finally attacking with the usual bombing parties leading. Italian infantry and Alpini fought desperately in their trenches and out of them. There never was a moment when they were not snowed under by the weight of numbers. Yet they fought on, and here and there even succeeded in clearing their front. . . . But it was a pretty hopeless business. At length along the battered front ran the news that reinforcements were coming up. It was true: they had passed through the curtain of death, paying a heavy toll of losses. They went into the fight with the dash that these Italian troops seem able to command at any moment, and the Edelweiss never had another chance. The newcomers simply rushed them down the hill to the woods, and fought them there in the smoke and over the charred wood underfoot, killing lavishly with the long sword bayonet which the infantryman is prone to slip from his rifle and use as a dagger with horrid effect. . . . Edelweiss badges can be bought very cheaply in the Italian lines to-day."

Such was the spirit which animated the Italians in the hour of their country's peril. They were determined to hold on to the mountain wall at all costs, though they knew that a great push by the Austro-Germans might at any moment sweep them down to the plain and make the river line a death-trap.

Relief, however, was rapidly approaching. Writing on the very day when fierce fighting was going on at the Zenson bend, a correspondent tells us that behind the Piave line the roads were blue with marching Frenchmen, while British khaki was more and more seen. The shrill brazen note of French bugles and the deeper blare of a British regimental band put new heart into the Italian soldiers, depressed by the retreat, and into civilians who trembled for the safety of their homes and possessions. Long after dark the correspondent met an English battalion trudging steadily onward through the mud with its band playing a brisk march. As our men passed the villagers cheered them, and waved their handkerchiefs wildly. Every day Allied reinforcements reached Italy in greater numbers. To save waiting for trains some of the French troops crossed the Alps, and thus repeated the achievements of Hannibal and Napoleon. The troops were delighted to be in Italy, amidst the lovely scenery and beneath the delicate golden sunshine of the Italian autumn.

* * * * * * *

The news of the Austro-German success and the rapid retreat of the Italians came as a great shock to the Allies. There was no doubt that the Central Powers had gained a very important advantage, and that the Allies had suffered a very grievous set-back. The Austro-Germans captured an army, and had gained possession of 2,500 guns and vast quantities of military stores. In a few days they had taken far more prisoners and guns than the British armies had seized during more than three years of war. The material which had fallen into their hands was priceless to them. The Italian guns and ammunition would now be used against the Allies, while the prisoners and the civilians of the invaded districts would have to labour and even fight for their conquerors.

The Austrians and Germans were also in possession of the rich plain of Venetia, which is a sort of hothouse garden, protected from cold winds by the encircling Alps, and watered by rivers innumerable. From the earliest times it has been renowned as the most fruitful plain in the world. It had now passed into the hands of nations who were suffering from hunger, and its grain and vegetables, its rice, grapes, olives, figs, etc., would be to them most helpful spoils of victory. There was no doubt that the disaster to the Italian forces would prolong the strife, not only because it gave the Central Powers much-needed war material and food, but because it would strengthen their confidence.

As soon as the blow had fallen the Prime Ministers of Britain, France, and Italy, along with their expert advisers, met at Rapallo, and decided to send reinforcements without loss of time to North Italy. They did this not only because there was a grave danger that the Austro-Germans would, if not checked, overrun the whole of North Italy, the richest and most fruitful part of the country, and the home of its great industries, but because they felt that they owed a great debt of gratitude to the stricken land. Italy had come into the war at a critical moment, had fought hard and well, and had engaged large numbers of Austrian troops which might have turned the scale elsewhere. If Italy should be forced to make a separate peace, all the burden of the war would be thrown upon Britain, France, and the United States, and what the end would be no man could say.

It was not easy to convey the troops to the scene of conflict. Only two lines of railway were available—those running through the Mont Cenis pass and those traversing the Riviera. The artillery problem was, however, still more difficult. As you know, big guns cannot be manufactured in a day.

On 12th November Mr. Lloyd George, the British Premier, addressed the representatives of the Allied Powers in a speech of "brutal frankness." He said that the armies must not be blamed for the disaster; the fault lay with the war control of the Allies. Though they had the command of the sea and the advantage of numbers, material, money, and resources, they had not made so much headway as they ought to have done. They had so far failed to achieve their purpose because there was an absence of real unity in the command of the Allied forces. While the Central Powers were fighting like a single state, governed by a single will, directing a single army and a single people for a single purpose, the nations attacked by Germany were fighting more or less their own fights, without a general plan, and without any one body to direct them.

"This is 1917. What has happened? Russia has collapsed; Italy is menaced. The business of Russia is to look after her own front; it is the concern of Italy to look after her own war. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Disastrous! Fatal! The Italian front is just as important to France and to Great Britain as it is to Germany. She understood that in time. Unfortunately, we did not."

He then went on to say that the extent to which they could prevent the Italian disaster from becoming fatal depended on the promptness and completeness with which they could break with the past and set up a unity of command for all the Allied forces. He proposed that in place of the many Allied general staffs and commanders-in-chief, a Supreme War Council should be set up which should consist of two representatives of each Allied country, along with a committee of military experts, who were to meet every day and give advice. The Council would direct the strategy of the Allies on all the fronts. "If this could be done," said Mr. Lloyd George, "I believe that we shall live to bless even the Italian disaster, for without it we could not have secured real unity. Prejudices and suspicions would have kept us apart. Had we learned this lesson even three months ago, what a difference it would have made!"

CHAPTER XVI.

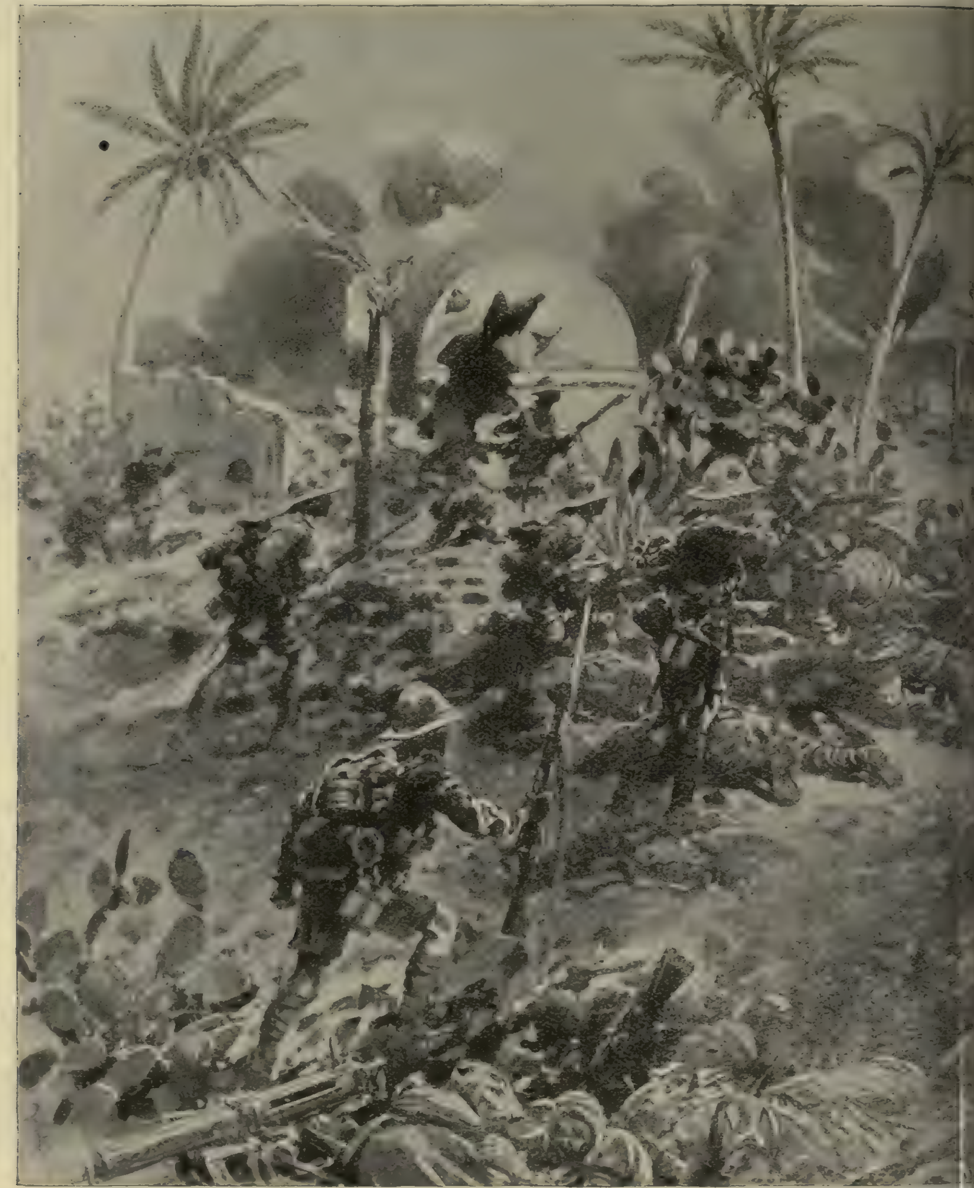
THE FALL OF GAZA.

IN Chapter VI. of our seventh volume I described our failure to capture Gaza, and I concluded my account with the remark that the fall of the town was only a matter of time. As events proved, it was a matter of very considerable time, for no progress was made for seven long months. Then, as you will learn in the next chapter, we went ahead very rapidly, and by 20th November were within twelve miles of Jerusalem.

Before I tell you the story of this successful advance, let me give you a much fuller account of our two unsuccessful attempts to carry Gaza than you read in Volume VII. For some reason the dispatch in which General Sir Archibald Murray described these failures was withheld until we were able to rejoice in victory. When the dispatch appeared in our newspapers on 21st November, we knew for the first time what many had guessed—namely, that both the earlier attempts to rout the Turkish forces on the Gaza-Beersheba line had resulted in costly reverses.

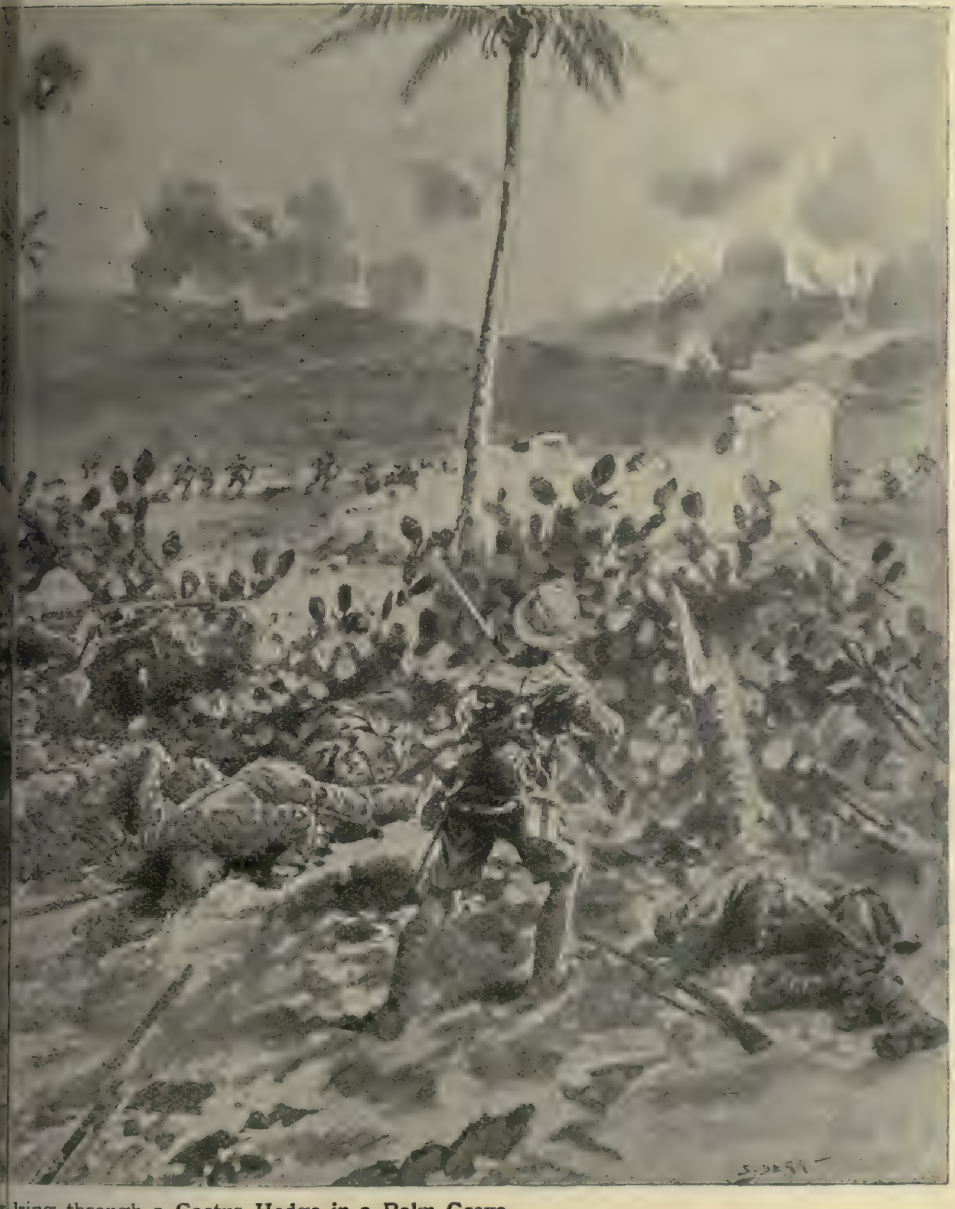
You will remember that we first tried to capture the town late in March, and were so far successful that we reached the outskirts of the place. We lost about four thousand men in this advance, and, though we were in stronger force than the enemy, were obliged to withdraw. Again, in mid-April we made another attempt. This time we had to face an enemy strongly reinforced: we made less progress than formerly, and our losses were about seven thousand. Nevertheless we captured a series of positions, which we held, and made the starting-point for the successful advance of November.

You must remember that the conduct of our Palestine operations depended almost wholly on the military railway which we



The Victory at Beersheba, October 30, 1917: Infan

(*From the picture by S. Begg.*



orking through a Cactus Hedge in a Palm Grove.

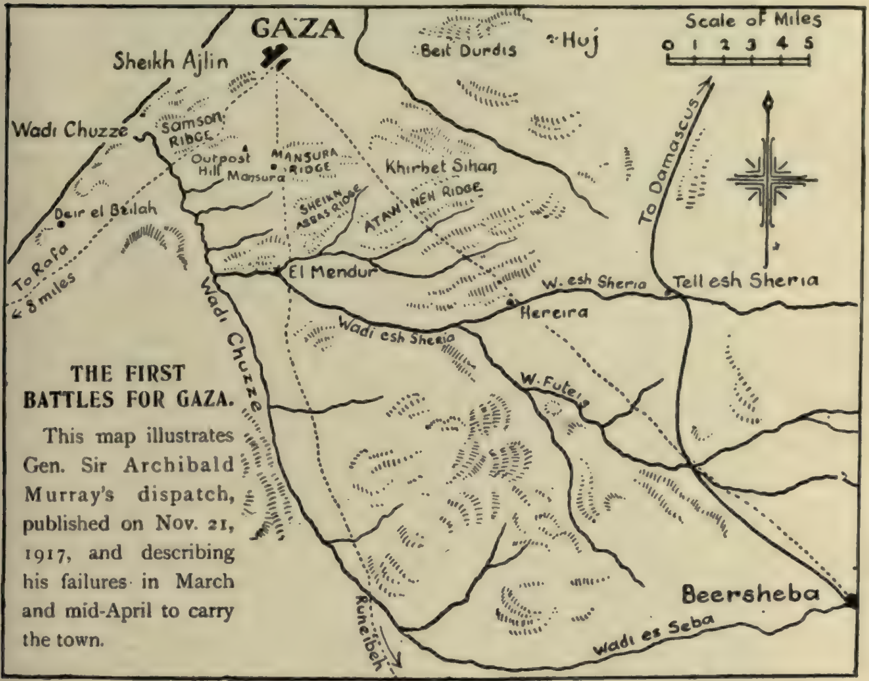
permission of The Illustrated London News.)

had to build across the sandy coastal tracts of the Sinai Peninsula from the Suez Canal. By the middle of March this line had reached Rafa, on the frontier of Palestine, about twenty miles from Gaza and thirty-five miles from Beersheba. Before the railway could be advanced any further, General Murray came to the conclusion that the enemy intended to withdraw his troops from the Gaza-Beersheba line. He wished to prevent this, and, in order to do so, thought it necessary to seize the Wadi Ghuzze, which lay between him and Samson Ridge. Until the Wadi was in his hands he could not push on with the railway. General Murray had thus three objects in view: he wished to prevent the Turks from retreating, to capture the Wadi, and, if possible, to carry Gaza itself and cut off its garrison. The dispatch shows that he attained his first two objects, but failed to secure the third.

The first stage of the battle began on 26th March, when the Anzac Mounted Division crossed the Wadi Ghuzze before six in the morning, and headed north-east for a position about five miles to the east of Gaza. Other mounted troops followed, and struck eastward for El Mendur. The movements of the mounted divisions as well as of the infantry were considerably delayed by a very dense fog, which came on just before dawn, and did not entirely clear till 8 a.m. The delay caused by the fog had a very serious effect upon the later operations, as we shall see.

The mounted troops, having advanced beyond the Wadi, spread out fan-wise, and covered a great deal of ground during the day. One detachment captured the commander of a Turkish division just as he was driving into Gaza. Meanwhile the infantry had crossed the Wadi, and two brigades had taken up a defensive position on the Sheikh Abbas Ridge. There they remained all day without coming into action. Another division was sent against the Ali Muntar Ridge, which you see on the map running from the south-west to the east of Gaza, at an average distance of about a mile from the town. Our attack was pressed very vigorously, and by 4.30 p.m. portions of the enemy positions were captured. Shortly afterwards the Ali Muntar Hill, less than a mile to the south-east of Gaza, was in our hands.

Meanwhile it was decided to throw the whole of the Anzac Mounted Division against the north and north-east of the town in order to assist the infantry. A fine advance was made, and


GAZA
Sheikh Ajlin
Beit Durdis
Huj
Scale of Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5
Wadi Chuzze
Samson Ridge
Outpost Hill
Mansura
Mansura Ridge
Khirbet Sihan
Deir el Belah
Sheikh Abbas Ridge
Atawineh Ridge
To Damascus
To Rafa 8 miles
El Mendur
W. esh Sheria
Tell esh Sheria
Hereira
Wadi esh Sheria
W. Futeis
Wadi Chuzze
Runeibeh
Beersheba
Wadi es Seba

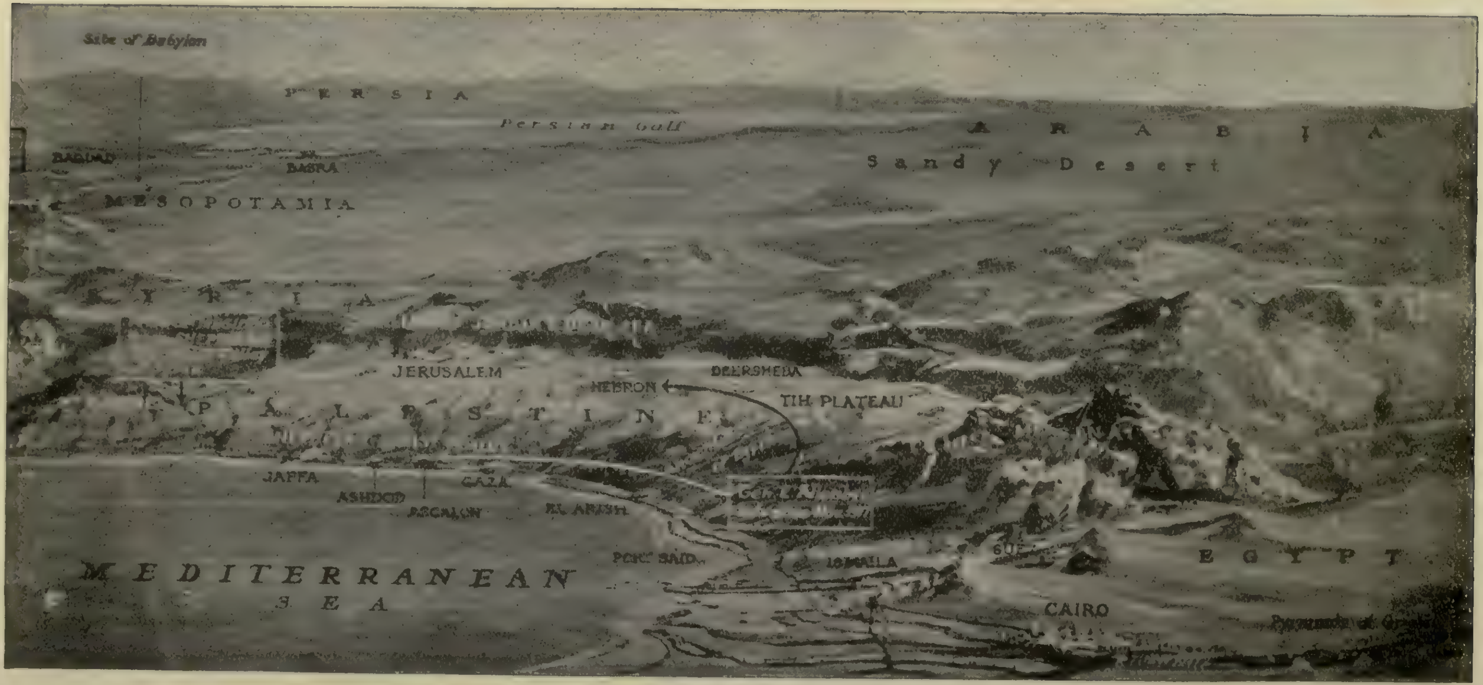
THE FIRST BATTLES FOR GAZA.

This map illustrates Gen. Sir Archibald Murray's dispatch, published on Nov. 21, 1917, and describing his failures in March and mid-April to carry the town.

by 5 p.m. Gaza was surrounded. Unless, however, it fell before nightfall, we should have to withdraw our mounted troops, because their horses had not been watered during the day, and were much distressed owing to the heat. At this time strong columns of the enemy, with guns, were moving from the north, north-east, and south-east to the relief of Gaza.

It was at this moment, General Murray tells us, that the loss of the two hours' daylight caused by the morning fog made itself chiefly felt. Had more daylight been available the infantry could have strengthened the positions which they had won, and the troops on the Ali Muntar position could have joined hands with those on the Sheikh Abbas Ridge. It is possible that this might have been done, late as it was, had General Dobell, who was in immediate command, pushed forward his reserves. Unhappily he did not do so, and during the night the Anzac mounted troops had to withdraw to escape being cut off.

This withdrawal exposed the flank of the troops on the Ali Muntar Ridge, and they also had to fall back. So, too,


Site of Babylon
PERSIA
Persian Gulf
BAGDAD
BASRA
MESOPOTAMIA
ARABIA
Sandy Desert
SYRIA
JERUSALEM
BEERSHEBA
HEBRON
TIH PLATEAU
PALESTINE
JAFFA
ASHDOD
GAZA
ASCALON
EL ARISH
PORT SAID
ISMAILA
EGYPT
CAIRO
MEDITERRANEAN
SEA

Bird's-eye View of Palestine.

Notice that the distance from Cairo to Jaffa by the coast road is 270 miles. This road runs as far as the Carmel range, which is crossed by the famous passes of Megiddo.

had the division on the Sheikh Abbas Ridge. The consequence was that the enemy was able to throw strong reinforcements into Gaza. When at daybreak our patrols tried to seize the positions up to the Ali Muntar Hill, they were driven back by a strong Turkish counter-attack. Meanwhile another Turkish attack threatened our right flank. It was now impossible to hold on to our positions, and the order to retire was given. By daylight next day the whole force had trekked back to the western side of the Wadi Ghuzze. We had captured 950 prisoners and two guns, at a loss of about four thousand men ; while the enemy casualties were estimated at double that number. General Murray tells us that his failure to capture Gaza was due to the delay caused by the fog on the 26th, and to the waterless country round the town. Otherwise he thinks that the result would have been a complete disaster to the enemy.

After this rebuff he set to work to prepare for a second attack in greater force. Not until 17th April did this new advance begin. Meanwhile the enemy had been strongly reinforced, and now five divisions and a cavalry division were arrayed against us. The Gaza defences had been made much stronger, and lines of trenches had been dug for some 12,000 yards from the town to the Atawineh Ridge. These trenches prevented any encircling movement by our cavalry. The mounted men could do nothing until the enemy's line had been pierced and a passage for them had been cleared by the infantry.

The second attack was to proceed by two stages. First, General Murray proposed to occupy the Mansura Ridge and the Sheikh Abbas Ridge, and strengthen his flanks so as to resist counter-attacks. When this position was captured, there was to be a short period of delay in order that the pipe line conveying the water might be advanced, and that heavy guns and Tanks might be brought up. Then, when all was ready, the actual advance on Gaza was to be made.

The first stage was carried through without much opposition, though one Tank was put out of action by a direct hit. Later in the day two other Tanks were struck by shells, and both burnt out. When the capture of the Mansura-Sheikh Abbas position was complete, there was a pause of two days, according to the programme. Then began the final attack. It opened with a bombardment of Ali Muntar by a French battleship and two British monitors. During the day the guns of these vessels broke up several enemy counter-attacks.

The 53rd Division, after a hard fight, took Samson Ridge, which lies about two and a half miles south of Gaza, and occupied other ground near the coast. But the troops on its right were not so fortunate. The 52nd Division, advancing against Ali Muntar, was held up by machine-gun fire at Outpost Hill. This check exposed the flank of the 54th Division, which was making for a point to the south-east of Ali Muntar. It was enfiladed by enemy fire, and again and again during the morning was fiercely counter-attacked. Until the 52nd Division on its left could go forward, the 54th Division could not safely advance. Sir Archibald Murray tells us that if General Dobell had thrown in his reserves the key of the position might have been taken, though probably in the process he would have lost between 5,000 and 6,000 men. This loss would have greatly weakened the British force, which was already much reduced, and would have made the holding of the line very difficult, especially as the enemy, owing to the nature of the ground, was able to attack from several directions. Further, General Dobell considered that the time had not yet arrived for the reserves to be flung into the swaying battle.

At nightfall we were holding a line stretching from Sheikh Ajlin, on the coast, in front of Samson Ridge, behind Outpost Hill, round the Sheikh Abbas Ridge, and thence south-eastwards and southwards to the Wadi Ghuzze.

General Murray now saw that the attack could not be finished that day, so he instructed General Dobell to hold the ground that had been gained in order that a forward push might be made on the morrow. During the night General Dobell sent a message to the effect that he could not make a successful advance next morning, and that he thought the wiser course would be to strengthen the positions already won, and hold on to them until reinforcements arrived. General Murray was very reluctant to agree to this proposal, but in the end he gave way. " In the meantime," he says, " it became apparent to me that General Dobell, who had suffered some weeks previously from a touch of the sun, was no longer in a fit state of health to bear the strain of further operations in the coming heat of summer. To my great regret, therefore, I felt it my duty to relieve him of his command."

The ground gained in this second battle was put into a condition of defence next day, and was held right down to the hour when our troops moved forward to the great success which I shall describe in the next chapter. It will interest you to learn that a French and an Italian detachment fought with the British in their attacks on Gaza.

* * * * * * *

Before I proceed with my story let me give you some idea of the physical geography of the country across which our advance was to be made. Look at the coast.* It stretches from north to south, with a slight curve westward, in a flat, unbroken line. Nowhere are there any deep indentations, and consequently there are no natural harbours. Now look inland. Running parallel with the coast, at a distance from the sea varying from seventy miles at the southern end to some thirty miles at the northern end, lies a trough-like valley. Through this deep rift or cleft runs the Jordan, which is better known than most of the great rivers of the world, simply because it figures so largely in Bible history.

The Jordan flows through the Sea of Galilee, from which its waters emerge bright and clear, and then meanders south in a course which is only sixty-five miles long as the aeroplane flies, but two hundred miles long if we measure its many windings. Between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, in which it ends, it is a foul, unpleasant stream, nowhere navigable, and without a single important town on its banks. Even the Hebrews of old did not sing its praises. To them it was the frontier line which marked off the nomadic tribes of the desert from the civilized and settled tribes of Palestine. Its valley is destitute of human life, save in summer.

The Dead Sea, in which the Jordan ends, fully deserves its name, for it is so intensely salt that no animal life can exist in it; the fish of the Jordan die if they are placed in its waters. If you were to bathe in the Dead Sea you would find that you could float without any exertion. It is about forty-seven miles long by nine and a half miles wide, and nowhere can you find a drearier stretch of water or more gloomy and depressing surroundings. You may be surprised to learn that the Jordan valley is far below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. The Sea of Galilee is about 690 feet below sea-level, and the Dead

* See bird's-eye view on p. 172.

Sea about 1,300 feet. Between these two lakes the Jordan runs, with many rapids and waterfalls, over a bed which is one long inclined plane.

Between the Jordan valley and the coastal plain you see a highland region not much bigger than a large English county. It was upon this fertile stretch of upland, only about fifty-five miles long and thirty miles wide, that the Jews of old lived and made history, that Jesus Christ spent His life upon earth, and that the Crusaders struggled with the Saracens. In all ages it has been the corridor, as it were, leading from Europe and Asia into Africa. Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Roman, Saracen, and Turkish rulers have striven to possess it either as the outer defence of Africa or as the gateway to that continent. After Napoleon lost his fleet at Aboukir Bay, he tried to conquer Palestine as the first step towards setting up an Eastern empire. You will remember that he was foiled at Acre by Sir Sidney Smith. "That man," he said, "made me miss my destiny."

The highland region rises fairly abruptly from the coast plain, and falls even more abruptly to the valley of the Jordan. You will notice that it is cleft by gullies running from the mountain's backbone to the sea. These gullies, or wadis, are dry in summer, and are only partly filled with water after storms and rain. Though they look like formidable obstacles, they are not so; indeed, they serve as excellent approaches from the lowlands to the mountains. There is no country so easy to invade and so difficult to defend as Palestine. There is no natural feature which can form a strong line of defence to an army advancing from south to north, save, perhaps, the line Beersheba-Gaza, which had so far twice defied us. The main difficulty which an army encounters in the Holy Land is to supply itself with food, and, above all, with water. Modern troops can only advance when accompanied by a railway and by a sufficiency of water. Happily the British began their new northward movement during the rainy season, and every mile that they pushed forward brought them into country where the water supplies were more and more plentiful.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CAPTURE OF BEERSHEBA, THE FALL OF GAZA, AND THE ADVANCE ON JERUSALEM.

AFTER the failures described in the former chapter, General Allenby was placed in command of our forces in South Palestine. His name is familiar to you as that of a very vigorous and capable soldier who had commanded the cavalry on the Western front ever since the Expeditionary Force landed in France. He was just the type of general that soldiers love—cool and collected, firm and decided, always quite clear as to what he meant to do, and always ready for the next move. "Allenby," said one of his officers, "is a certainty." His men greatly admired him, and he was never afraid to give them full praise whenever they deserved it. He made no attempt to move until 30th October, when his troops advanced along a thirty-mile front from the south of Gaza to the south of Beersheba.

This town, you will remember, marked the southern limit of Palestine in Bible times, just as Dan marked its northern limit. It stands on a treeless watershed with a deep, dry watercourse behind it. As the traveller approaches the place he sees its white mosques and its bits of garden. By no means an attractive town, it is, nevertheless, an outpost of civilization on the edge of the desert. For many months it was the Turkish advanced base against Egypt. From it ran a highway, now a good motor road, which, nevertheless, had to climb 2,000 feet to the plateau before it reached Hebron, standing in its narrow gorge. The Turks had built a new railway of second-hand sleepers and worn-out metals to connect Beersheba with the main line, which runs through Philistia.

Jaffa, the Port of Jerusalem. (See page 188.)

Against this place, which was on the Turkish left flank, General Allenby was now about to make a big effort.

In the early moonlight hours of 30th October Australian and New Zealand mounted troops, followed by infantry, began a long night march. The horsemen made a wide and rapid sweep from the south to the east of the town, so as to be ready to rush its defences at dawn, and get astride of the Beersheba-Hebron road in order to cut off the retreat. The eastern horizon had only begun to glow with the sunrise when the infantry attacked the Turkish trenches on a hill three miles to the south of the town. The redoubt on this hill was very strong, and its machine guns kept up a heavy fire. Half an hour after the beginning of the attack the machine guns were knocked out, and with a rush our men carried the hill. Meanwhile the trenches on the south-west of the town were being heavily bombarded. After our guns had flung shells on the defences for an hour, English county troops, with wonderful courage and resource, rushed across the open, and led by bombers, who worked their way through the wire broken by our artillery, flung themselves upon the enemy, and drove the survivors back on the town. By 3.30 on the 31st the mounted troops had won a hill three miles to the east of the place, which was now hemmed in on three sides. They now charged the strongly-held trenches facing them, and, carrying all before them, galloped cheering into Beersheba.

The Turk had been surprised. He hurried away in full retreat, but before doing so blew up a railway engine and burnt the engine-house. He left, however, a train standing in the station. This he was unable to get away, for one of our guns by a direct hit had destroyed the bridge over the wadi. As our troops came pouring into the town they discovered that the enemy had left behind him many warehouses full of grain.

The left wing of the Turkish line of defence had now gone; the Gaza front was now "in the air," and was bound to fall sooner or later. Nevertheless the Turks were confident that we could not capture it. It lay, you will remember, within a powerful system of field fortifications, on which much labour had been expended. The trenches were deep and well made; the dug-outs, a dozen feet below the ground, were provided with head-cover of palm logs, nine feet thick, beneath a protection of sand-bags, and were approached by winding stairs.

General Allenby had no intention of rushing these formidable defences; the capture of Beersheba had made such costly tactics quite unnecessary.

For ten days warships, heavy howitzers, and field batteries poured a terrific fire on the Gaza defences. The Turks had never before been so heavily assailed, not even in Gallipoli. A French general with Allenby tells us that, early one morning some days before we resumed our attack, a Turkish general sprang across the short space of ground which separated his trenches from those of the British, and surrendered. He was followed by an orderly carrying his clothes in a valise. When asked why he had abandoned his troops he said, "I was through the Dardanelles campaign, and I know the kind of men opposed to me. After the Gallipoli business was over I was sent with my division to Rumania, where it formed part of a mixed army corps of Germans, Bulgarians, and Turks, under a German commander. Of my 16,000 men, 12,000 disappeared—killed, wounded, or taken prisoner; while the Bulgarians did not lose many more than a thousand, and the Germans only about a dozen. This was a bit too much. Now I consider that the wisest course for me is to preserve my life in the interests of my country. I do not wish it to be stupidly sacrificed for the German cause. Moreover, even if I were lucky enough to escape being shot, I should certainly have died of hunger, as provisions are no longer reaching us."

No doubt there were many of like mind in the Turkish ranks, and those who remained faithful were terribly shaken by our bombardment. Never before had they been so battered, and now, to make a long story short, they simply bolted. Had they elected to stay and fight, there is little doubt that our losses would have been heavy. As it was, in most places our troops simply walked into the Turkish trenches. Men from the western counties and Indians advanced along the ridge south-east of Gaza, and East Anglian and home counties troops pushed along the shoreward side. Only a few Turks remained, and their resistance was feeble.

While the attack on Gaza was proceeding the right wing pushed forward ten miles north of Beersheba, and on the night of 5th November reached Khuweilfeh, where there was a stubborn fight for the ridge. Welshmen and home counties troops with great gallantry stormed the ridge, but had to meet a heavy counter-attack, which forced them back a little. Before long, however, the Turks had lost their gains, and were fleeing to the rear. The Camelry and Yeomanry, setting off in pursuit, rounded up large numbers of them amongst the hills, where they had taken refuge. The Welshmen behaved very gallantly, and sternly avenged their comrades who had fallen in the second battle of Gaza. The Turkish troops which they routed were known as the Lightning and the Tempest Divisions. On that day the lightning and the tempest were with the Welshmen.

If you look at the map on page 171 you will see Hareira, between the Damascus road and the Wadi Ghuzze. There was a strong redoubt at this place, and it made a stubborn resistance. In the end it was rushed at the point of the bayonet by Irishmen, who also captured several hundred prisoners, four guns, and two machine guns.

The Turkish commander, seeing that his right and centre were in jeopardy, now ordered Gaza to be abandoned.

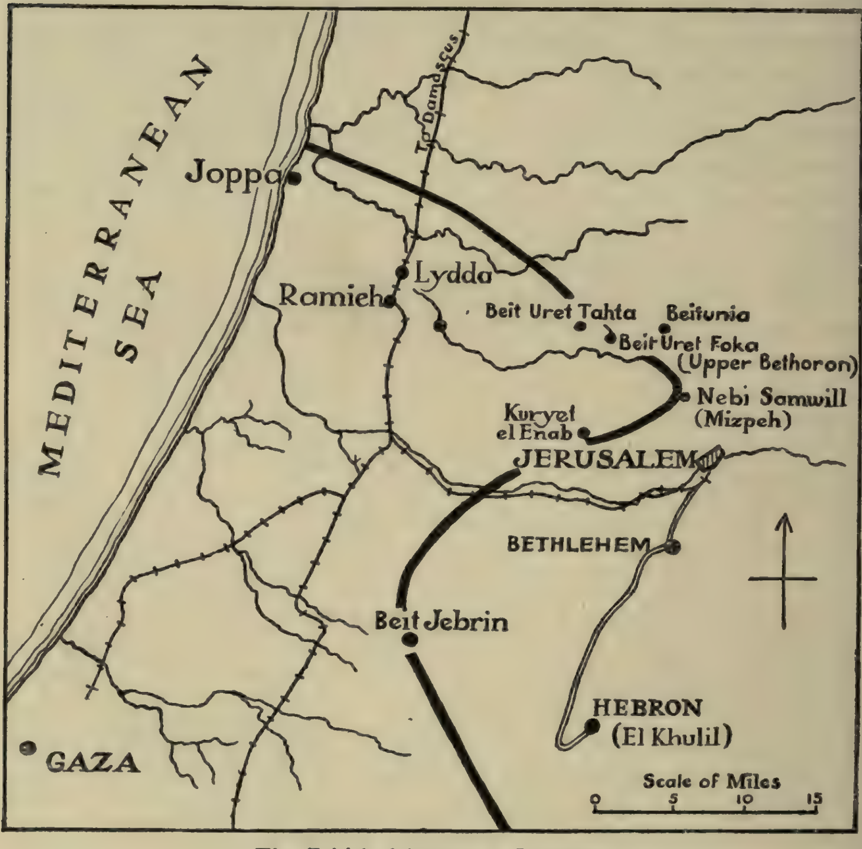
"Soon after noon we had the clearest indications that the Turk was clearing out hurriedly. A big ammunition store was blown up a long way in the rear of the enemy's old line. The shock was terrific. Looking across country we then saw a gigantic mushroom of smoke in the direction of the enemy's newly-made but now useless railway. I have heard that a building twenty miles away was shaken by the explosion. The enemy had, doubtless, learned that this valuable store of ammunition could not possibly be saved. Scottish Territorials, held in reserve during the attack on Gaza, had made a night march to hammer the position. A better choice could not have been made.

"The march was over a thirteen-mile belt of sand dunes. All the way the going was ankle deep in sand. The Scots ploughed along, conquering difficulties which less stout troops would have found too great. But these Lowlanders had marched all the way into Palestine from the Suez Canal, though often leg-weary. When dawn broke they had gained the high ground, and were thus able to prevent the Turks from using the railway. The Scots brought with them their field guns and heavy batteries, in itself a wonderful feat; and the Turks, feeling the weight of their metal, moved eastward out of their way. On the east other troops, amongst them Irishmen and Londoners, in spite of the most difficult conditions, had long marches with spells of fighting.

"The Turks on leaving Gaza filled in the wells with filth, and generally wrecked the place. There still remain, however, some traces of old civilization. . . . There is an ancient carved stone with a lion, perhaps connected with Richard Cœur de Lion's landing at Ascalon. When in Gaza to-day I saw Samson's Mound, Ali Muntar, crowded with British Tommies looking at the fighting in the distance. It is the first time for eight months that a head dared show itself on this landmark—a sure and certain sign of the completeness of our victory."

You will be interested to learn that during the attack on Gaza Tanks rendered very valuable service. They did not make very good progress amidst the sand dunes; nevertheless they nosed their way into the enemy lines and cleared out several strong points.

On the morning of 7th November our troops entered Gaza.


MEDITERRANEAN SEA
To Damascus
Joppa
Lydda
Ramieh
Beit Uret Tahta
Beitunia
Beit Uret Foka
(Upper Bethoron)
Nebi Samwill
(Mizpeh)
Kuryet el Enab
JERUSALEM
BETHLEHEM
Beit Jebrin
HEBRON
(El Khulil)
GAZA
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 15

The British Advance on Jerusalem.

As they entered its streets many of them must have recalled the Bible story of Samson. You will remember that he was captured by the Philistines, who "put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass, and he did grind in the prison house." It was in Gaza that he was taken to the temple to "make them sport," and while there he took hold of the "two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up." Then he said, "Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein." Probably some of our soldiers thought, too, of the glorious poem in which Milton, when himself stricken with blindness, described with wonderful sympathy and pathos the latter days of the mighty but sightless hero of Israel.

From a distance the old Philistine city, seated on a gentle elevation and surrounded by gardens and plantations, looked a picturesque place; but our men, when they threaded the great cactus hedges which barred their entrance, discovered that most of the buildings which still stood were filthy and evil-smelling hovels of mud-brick. The cactus hedges especially attracted their attention. They were from six to twenty feet thick, and had been almost uninjured by the shrapnel. Against these thorny barriers, with their many spear-points, our men had been unable to make headway during the advance of the previous April. The Turks had used the hedges as obstacles, and behind them had set up wire entanglements. The trenches, thus doubly protected, were found to be very strong and elaborate. It was noticed that the sand-bags were made of silk and dress material, thus showing clearly that cotton was scarce amongst the Turks.

A general retreat of the Turkish army now began all along the line, and Allenby's cavalry went in hot pursuit, determined that the scattered forces of the enemy should not rally.

On 9th November our line ran as shown on the map, and the Turks, who had fallen back in a north-easterly direction from Beersheba, took up a position between Beit Jibrin and Hebron. General Allenby, who meant to capture Jerusalem, decided to hold the Turks in their new position, while his left wing advanced along the coast and on both sides of the railway running north from Beersheba. Ascalon was occupied, and next day (10th November) his left wing reached Esdrid. Meanwhile the Royal Flying Corps bombed the junction where the coast railway from Gaza joins the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. Several direct hits were made on the rolling-stock and on the station buildings. The enemy rearguard now took up a strong position on the Wadi Sukereir, north of Jaffa, but from this he was

Jerusalem from Golgotha. Capture b

(*By permission of*

eneral Allenby on December 9, 1917.
llustrated London News.)

dislodged on 12th November. A two days' running fight followed, in the course of which 1,500 prisoners were taken, with four guns and twenty machine guns.

On the 12th two Edinburgh and two Rifle battalions attacked Bareka, a few miles to the north-east of Esdud (Ashdod). The Turks were holding a very strong position previously prepared, and their trenches could only be reached by crossing a thousand yards of absolutely flat ground. Our men advanced, swept the Turks out of the first line, and then, supported by accurate artillery fire, carried the second line. The Edinburgh troops holding one of the hills were counter-attacked and driven back. They returned, however, reinforced by Gurkhas, and retook the hill; whereupon the Turks retired, leaving a large number of dead.

While this fighting was in progress Scots from the south-western counties pushed forward eight miles north of Esdud, and next morning attacked two isolated villages on rocky hills rising steeply from the bare plain. Both villages were enclosed by cactus hedges. While the Scots were routing out a nest of machine gunners in a clump of cypresses, surrounded by cactus and covering the enemy's main position, Yeomanry from two Thames-side counties carried a double-topped hill on the west, and began to distract the attention of the Turks by rapid rifle-fire. At once the Scots rushed forward and cleared the whole place. The movements of other troops helped to hem in the Turks on all sides, and as a consequence fourteen hundred prisoners, twenty-eight machine guns, and three field guns were taken.

A correspondent wrote as follows :—

> "There were so many gallant and clever things done by the Scots during those tiring days that it is impossible to mention them all. One man with a Lewis gun enfiladed an enemy trench. The Turks had had enough in ten seconds, and threw up their hands, with the result that he took forty-five prisoners. . . . The Scots have proved that they are ten times better men than the Turks with the bayonet, as has been demonstrated by the numbers of dead left behind by the enemy after every attack. One Scottish battalion marched sixty-nine miles in seven days, fighting a good deal by the way. The behaviour of these stout Scots on the sacred soil of Palestine has been grand. None of Sir Walter Scott's *Talisman* heroes fought with greater determination than these valiant Lowlanders."

On 14th November Naana, a small Arab village eighteen miles from Jerusalem, was occupied. Next day Australian and

New Zealand mounted troops pushed on to Lydda, and so cut railway communication between Jaffa and Jerusalem. On the 17th Jaffa was occupied without opposition, and the Turks withdrew to the Auja river, shown on the map to the north of Jaffa. As soon as Jaffa was in our possession General Allenby sent his mounted troops towards the Holy City, his central column marching on both sides of the railway. On the 18th the horsemen were twelve miles north-west of Jerusalem, and on the following day the infantry were only fifteen miles from its western side. It was clear that the next piece of good news to be received would be the fall of Jerusalem.

Before I conclude this chapter let me remind you that almost every foot of ground trodden by our men during this advance is famous in history. The wells of Beersheba were probably those for which Abraham and Isaac struggled, and at which they watered their flocks. Hebron has even closer associations with Abraham, who "moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre which are in Hebron, and built there an altar to the Lord." In the neighbourhood one is still shown the oak under which the patriarch sat when he entertained angels unawares, and surmounted by a mosque is the cave of Machpelah, in which Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were buried. The cave of Adullam is on the Hebron road, and one of the neighbouring wadis is said to be the scene of David's fight with Goliath. In the days of Joshua Hebron was a city of refuge, and it was from the country round about that the spies carried back to camp the cluster of grapes. Abner was murdered at Hebron, which was also the scene of Absalom's rebellion.

Gaza was one of the five royal Philistine cities, the others being Gath, Ashdod, Ascalon, and Ekron, the latter of which was the farthest north, as Gaza was the farthest south. Gath has entirely disappeared, but the other places retain their names. Ascalon, which is now deserted save for a few reed-roofed huts in the midst of wells and gardens which are rapidly being buried by the shifting sand dunes, was once the chief city of Philistia, and was known as the "Bride of Syria." It was the birthplace of Herod the Great, who murdered the innocents, and his towers are still to be seen in ruin.

The Crusaders lay in front of Ascalon in August 1099, but quarrelled so greatly as to which nation was to possess it that they did not receive its surrender. It was captured after a five months' siege in 1157, but the Saracens recovered it thirty-four years later. When Richard of the Lion Heart threatened the city Saladin dismantled its walls. The English king took it in 1192, and repaired its walls, which were again dismantled when it passed out of his hands. Thereafter for forty years Ascalon lay desolate. In 1241 it passed into the possession of the Knights Templars, who held it for six years. Then the Egyptians seized it, and since 1270 it has been a mere site, the massive ruins alone testifying to its former greatness.

Jaffa, the Joppa of the Bible, is the port of Jerusalem. It stands on an open roadstead, and the absence of a harbour is a great drawback. From Joppa Jonah started on his voyage, as described in the Second Book of the Chronicles. Just outside the garden region which lies beyond its Jerusalem gate is the Plain of Sharon. It was at Joppa that King Hiram's cedar-tree rafts were broken up and transported to Jerusalem for the building of Solomon's temple. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king who led an army into Palestine in 701 B.C., attacked the city in the following year. Jerusalem, you will remember, was threatened, but was saved by the miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army, which perished in a single night.

In the house of "one Simon a tanner at Joppa" Peter had his vision of the clean and unclean animals. The port played a large part in the Crusades. Richard Yea and Nay captured it in 1191, and put an English garrison in the castle. In his absence King Saladin recaptured the city, all but the castle. While it was holding out Richard returned, and storming the place from the sea, released his men. Subsequently Joppa passed into the hands of the Egyptians. In 1799 it was seized by Napoleon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JERUSALEM THROUGH THE AGES.—I.

BEFORE I describe the capture and occupation of Jerusalem, let me give you a brief account of its history. We can scarcely think of Palestine without Jerusalem, and there is good reason to believe that it has always been the chief city of the country. Its history extends over 3,400 years. From about 1500 B.C. its name constantly occurs in Egyptian records. Seated on spurs of the backbone ridge of Palestine, it was a renowned stronghold in the time of David, who captured it, fortified it, and built his royal residence within its bounds. His son Solomon beautified the place, and built a magnificent temple and palace on a ridge to the east of the two hills occupied by the city. The story of the building of the temple is told in the sixth chapter of the First Book of Kings, where we read that " the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." As the poet Heber says,—

> " No hammers fell, no ponderous axes rung;
> Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprung."

When it was completed, " the ark of the Lord, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels " were placed in its Holy of holies. During the reign of Solomon Jerusalem became the headquarters of the Israelites.

In the days of King Rehoboam an Egyptian king besieged the city, and despoiled the temple of its golden ornaments. A hundred years later it was again plundered by Arabian and Philistine tribes. After a lapse of sixty more years it was ravaged by Jehoash, king of Israel, after he had defeated

Amaziah, king of Judah. In the reign of Uzziah, the son of the discomfited king, Jerusalem again became prosperous, though during the same period it was visited by a great and destructive earthquake.

When the city was threatened by Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, Hezekiah repaired its fortifications, and gave it a water supply by means of an underground channel through which flowed the waters of a spring rising on the eastern slope of the temple hill. The city flourished in the days of the good king, but it fell into ruin when he was gathered to his fathers. Under King Jehoiachin it was obliged to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, who pillaged the temple and the royal palace, and carried off captive not only the king and the nobles, but seven thousand "men of might," and one thousand craftsmen and their families. Those who remained made a hopeless attempt to throw off the yoke of their conquerors, and the city suffered a terrible siege, which lasted for one year, five months, and seven days, during which time pestilence and famine stalked the streets. The besieged made a desperate defence; they stubbornly contested every inch of ground. But they were overcome at last, and the Babylonians carried off all the treasures which still remained, burned the temple to the ground, and destroyed most of the city.

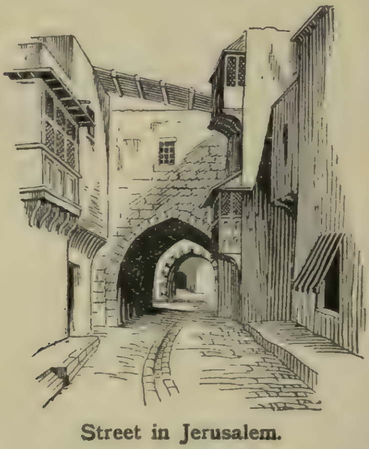
When the Jews returned from captivity they once more settled in Jerusalem. A new temple was begun in the year 535 B.C., and after a long delay, due to the obstruction of neighbouring tribes, was completed in 515. Another band of captives, under Ezra, returned in 458, and established the law, while Nehemiah rebuilt the wall. Once more Jerusalem became the shrine of Israel. The next conqueror to appear was Alexander the Great. After his death the city passed into Egyptian hands. For wellnigh one hundred and fifty years it had peace; but in the year 175 B.C. it again became the scene of bloodshed. The Syrian king, Antiochus, plundered the temple, and two years later razed the walls to the ground. He established himself in a stronghold in the city, and there remained until the days of the "Lion of Judah," Judas Maccabæus, the great deliverer of the Jews. He recaptured the city, purified the temple, and made successful attacks upon the neighbouring tribes, though he was not able to oust the Syrians from their stronghold. This task was accomplished in

The Captor of Jerusalem, General Sir H. H. Allenby, K.C.B.
(Official photo.)

the year 41 B.C. by Simeon, who starved out the garrison. Under Simeon's son, however, the city again fell a prey to the Syrians, though it was afterwards recovered.

The quarrels of the citizens at length gave the Romans an excuse to interfere. Under Pompey they attacked the temple, and on a Sabbath day filled up the moat, and thus made an embankment across which they fought their way into the sacred place. So angry were they at the obstinate resistance of the defenders that they slew some 12,000 of the citizens in cold blood. Pompey, to the great distress of the Jews, went into the Holy of holies, which none might enter save the priests, but left the treasures intact. A few years later another Roman conqueror, less scrupulous than he, carried them off. The land of the Hebrews now became a Roman province, " paying tribute to Cæsar."

In 40 B.C. the Parthians attacked the city, but later on the Jews recovered it. Three years later Herod, with the help of the Romans, overcame the inhabitants after a gallant defence, and put thousands of them to the sword. He rebuilt and adorned Jerusalem, set up a new temple, erected a glorious palace for himself, and restored the citadel. When the work was completed Jerusalem was a noble city, with palaces, and lofty walls crowned by many towers. Such was its character in the days of Jesus Christ, though the streets were very narrow and crooked, and remain so unto this day. In the time of our Lord Jerusalem was densely populated, especially at the time of festivals.



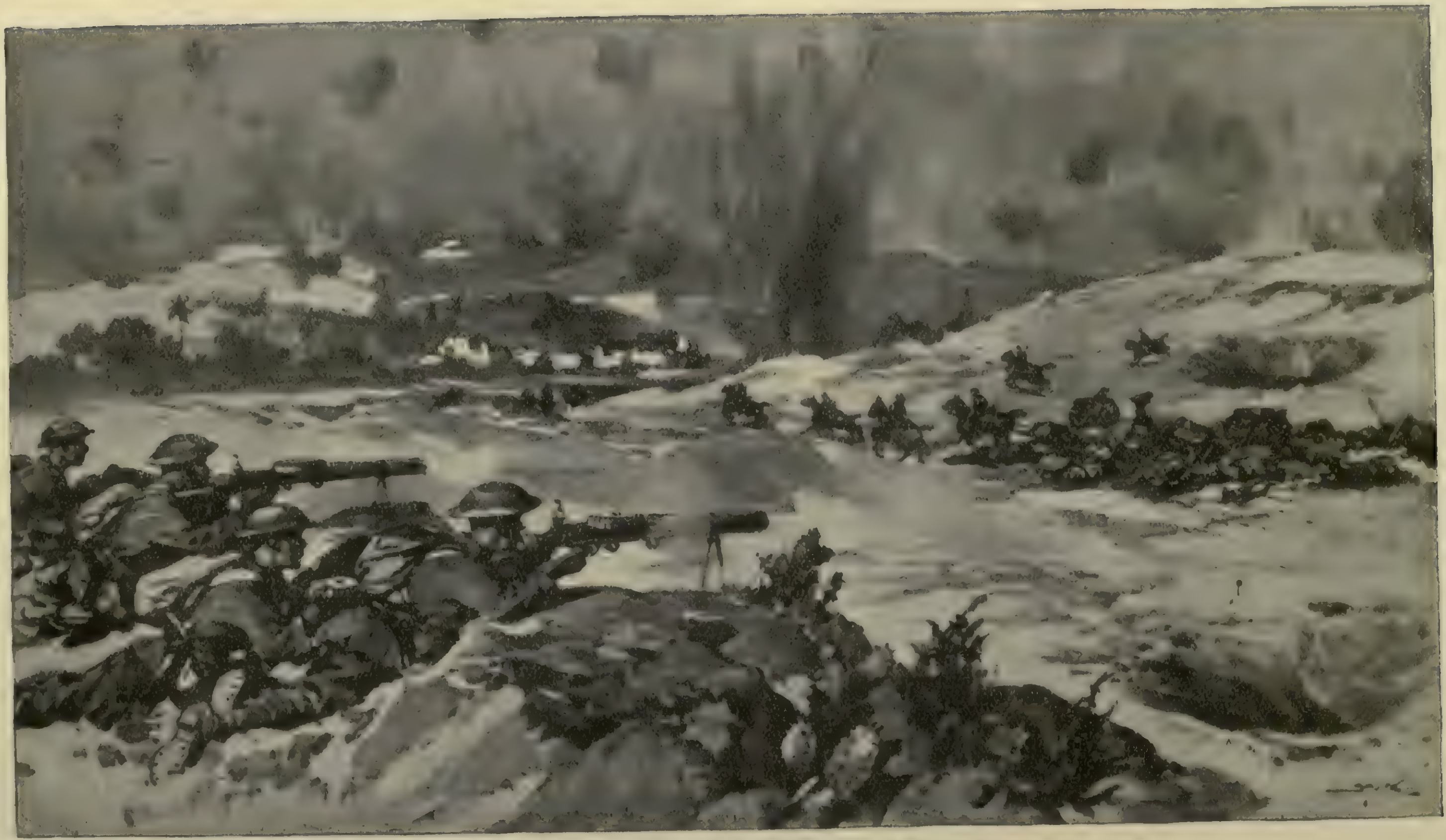
Street in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIX.

JERUSALEM THROUGH THE AGES.—II.

AFTER the death of Jesus there were two parties in the city—the Zealots, who were eager to sacrifice themselves, if necessary, in throwing off the yoke of the Romans ; and the moderate men, who did not wish to proceed to violence. The Zealots gained the upper hand, and drove out Herod Agrippa II. and his sister Bernice. An incompetent Roman general failed to recover the city, and the Zealots dispersed his army. They then raised an insurrection throughout the whole of Palestine.

The Romans now sent their able general, Vespasian, with sixty thousand men to quell the rising. After a great part of the country had been subdued, he marched against Jerusalem, but was obliged to return to Rome and leave the rest of the campaign to his son Titus. I have not space in which to tell you fully the story of the siege. You can read it for yourself in the pages of Josephus, a Jewish historian who had attached himself to the imperial family of Rome. He it was who vainly called upon the Jews to surrender after the siege had been in progress forty-five days. Already Titus had broken into the new town, and had destroyed the whole north side of the wall. He now built a wall which completely surrounded the inner wall of the city, and thus shut in the townsfolk. A terrible famine followed, and thousands of the inhabitants perished of hunger. At length, on the night of July 5, A.D. 70, the citadel was stormed. The Jews still held the gates of the temple, and fought desperately. On 10th August a Roman soldier, disobeying the command of Titus, flung a firebrand into the temple, which was burned to the ground. By 7th September the whole city was in the hands of the Romans, but it was little more than a heap of ruins. All who had



An Incident near Gaza during the Enemy's Retreat.

(*From the picture by H. W. Koekkoek. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

In the above picture British machine gunners are seen destroying two teams of Turkish artillery.

opposed Titus were slain, and the rest were sold as slaves. On his arch in the forum of the ancient city of Rome you may still see carvings showing the seven-branched candlestick from the temple being borne in his triumph.

In 136 the Emperor Hadrian rebuilt the city; but two years later the Jews again rose in rebellion. For centuries later we know little or nothing of the history of Jerusalem, save that the Jews were prevented from setting foot within its walls. When, however, the Roman Empire became Christian a new era set in. The Jews were allowed to return to their mother city, and pious men from all the countries of Europe began to make pilgrimages to the holy places which it contained. Hospices for the pilgrims and several churches and monasteries were founded, and in every Christian land the name and fame of Jerusalem were cherished.

The troublous history of the Holy City continued during the seventh century. It was alternately in the hands of the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks of Constantinople, and the Arabs. One of the Arab caliphs who was overlord of the city was the famous Haroun-al-Raschid, of whom you heard in Chapter VIII. of our seventh volume. It is said that he sent the keys of the Holy Sepulchre to the great Christian emperor Charlemagne. The Arabs freely permitted Christians to worship in the city, and it was only when the Seljuk Turks came into power that the Christians of Palestine were persecuted. These persecutions led to the Crusades.

During the First Crusade the Christian army advanced to the walls of Jerusalem, and on July 15, 1099, the Damascus Gate was opened to them from within. They entered the city, slew most of the Moslem and Jewish inhabitants, and set up Godfrey of Bouillon as governor. For about half a century Jerusalem, along with several other towns, was in the hands of Crusaders. In 1187 the chivalrous Saracen king Saladin captured the city, and showed great mercy to the Christian inhabitants. Three years later, during the Third Crusade, Jerusalem was again threatened, but the Christians were too weak to capture it. An old story tells us that Richard of the Lion Heart, when within sight of the Holy City, flung his mantle over his face and refused to gaze upon it, because he was powerless to overcome it. For two hundred and seventy years, from 1247 onwards, it was subject to Egypt, but ultimately fell into the hands of the Turks. Ever since the year 1517 it has been a Moslem city.

Such in brief outline is the troubled and stormy story of Jerusalem, the most sacred city of earth. It stands

"In those holy fields
Over whose acres walked those blessèd feet
Which, nineteen hundred years ago, were nailed
For our advantage on the bitter cross."

Everywhere the visitor to Jerusalem sees spots associated with the life and death of the Founder of Christianity.

"There was the temple, type of the Saviour. Beyond it was Zion, symbol of the Church of God. Here lies the whole scene of our Lord's last actions, teaching, and passion. There He instituted the Supper. Below us is the garden of agony and betrayal. The palace of Pilate was on that hill above it, where He was examined, was scourged, buffeted, robed in mock purple, and crowned with thorns. Along that rocky way He bore His cross; there He was nailed to it, was lifted up; finished, He bowed His head and died. Then the sun refused to shine, and darkness fell on all the land; the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the graves were opened. There was a new tomb in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. Thither the angel came down and rolled the stone from the door, while the Lord of Life burst the bars of death, and rose triumphant o'er the grave. All those things

'Which kings and prophets waited for,
But died without the sight,'

did actually take place here. These eyes gaze up to the same heaven which opened to receive Him ascending to His Father's right hand." *

Sacred, also, is Jerusalem to the Moslems. They claim that from the Dome of the Rock Mohammed began his journey to heaven; that beneath it the souls of the dead gather weekly for the Friday prayers; and that on it will be erected the throne of God at the Judgment Day.

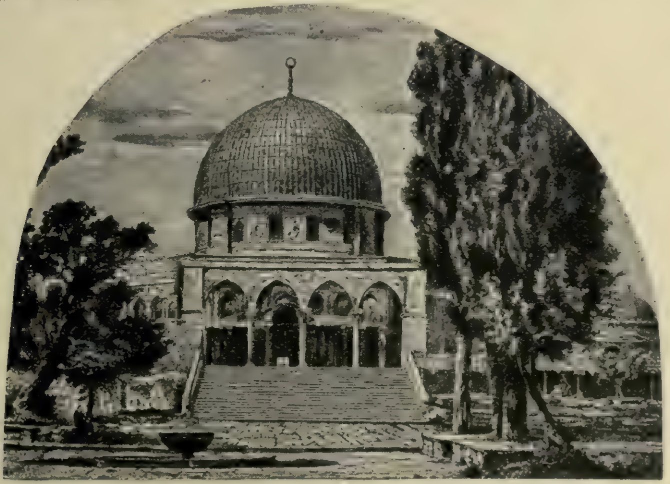
In Chapter XVIII. you read of the fierceness and constancy with which the Jews strove to retain their mother city. After the fall of the Roman Empire most of them were driven from Palestine, and large numbers settled in the German states, from whence they spread over Europe, and indeed over the whole world. Despised and persecuted, a people without a country, they never ceased to yearn for their lost city. At what is known as the Wailing-Place of the Jews men have grieved for the downfall of Jerusalem since the Middle

* Quoted from W. M. Thomson's *The Land and the Book.*

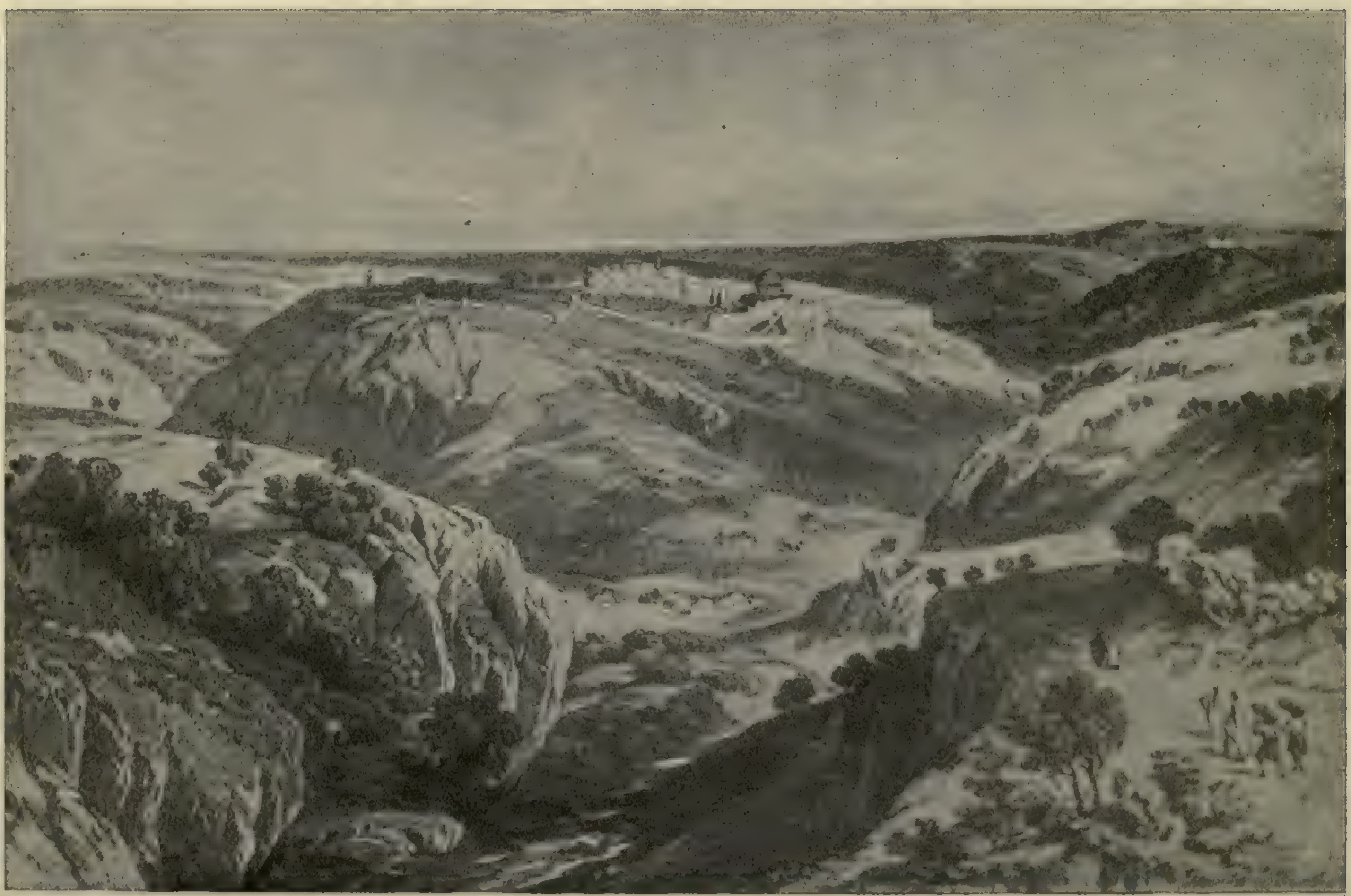
Ages. It is a touching sight to see them kissing the weather-beaten wall and weeping bitterly. To them the city is the earthly dwelling of the Most High, the central shrine of their religion, and the outward and visible sign of their nationality. As long as it was theirs they were sure that God was with them. When they were carried away into captivity they still dreamed of it, and in their exile sang,—

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy."

In recent years many of the Jews have formed themselves into a society known as the Zionists, the object of which is to set up a Jewish state in the land of their origin and history. When the British began the conquest of Palestine the Zionists approached the Government, and begged permission to be allowed to establish in Palestine "a national home for the Jewish people." To their great joy the British Government agreed, and it is, therefore, probable that after the war the Jews will once more have a "local habitation and a name" in the land of Israel.



The Mosque of Omar on the Dome of the Rock.



Jerusalem from the South, showing Mount Zion with its Encircling Ravines.

(*From a drawing by D. Roberts, R.A., made about* 1840.)

CHAPTER XX.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.

IN Chapter XVII. we left the British forces within a dozen miles of Jerusalem. A correspondent tells us that nothing but intense pressure could have forced the Turks to abandon some of their positions in the foothills. On either side of the Jaffa-Jerusalem road along which our men advanced there are heights of a thousand feet, which, if defended, would have checked a very strong army for many weeks. About a dozen miles from Jerusalem the hills are gray and rocky, and most of them are barren and forbidding. Their crests command the approaches to Jerusalem from the west, and had the Turks elected to make a stubborn stand upon them our progress would have been slow and costly. As it was, they left most of them as we approached, notwithstanding the fact that they had prepared systems of defence.

As our men advanced up the passes they found the ground so rocky that "digging in" was impossible. "Sangars" were formed of boulders lying around the bases of the hills. Such defences, though they cost much labour, were not so secure as trenches. Meanwhile the engineers were at work turning the goat tracks into motor roads with wonderful rapidity. Much of the credit for the speedy advance from the Gaza-Beersheba line was due to the energy and skill of these fine road-makers.

Though the Turks abandoned many of their positions without a blow, there were many hard fights amongst the Judæan hills, where small bodies of Turks attempted to delay our advance. The rocky defiles and deep gorges helped the enemy, but in no place could he hold out long.

On 19th November the Turks at the point of the bayonet were driven from the defile of Kuryet-el-Enab, six miles west of Jerusalem, by Somerset, Wiltshire, and Gurkha regiments. This place is said to be the Kirjath-jearim so frequently mentioned in the stories of Saul and David. It was at Kirjath-jearim that the ark rested for twenty years before its removal to Jerusalem. On the same day our mounted troops were in contact with the enemy four miles west of El Bireh, the Beeroth of the Hebrews. It stands on a hill nearly 3,000 feet above sea-level, and is nine miles due north of Jerusalem. A mile and a half away to the north-east is Bethel, where Abraham pitched his tent and built an altar to the Lord, as related in the twelfth chapter of the book of Genesis. Beeroth was the scene of Jacob's vision when he saw the angels ascending and descending from the ladder set up from earth to heaven, and received the promise that he should be father of a great nation.

On the 21st our troops stormed the Nebi Samwil ridge, the site of ancient Mizpah, where, you will remember, Jacob and Laban made their covenant, and Laban said, " The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another." Our troops were careful not to injure the mosque, which is said to contain the tomb of the prophet Samuel ; but the Turks bombarded it. Repeatedly they made counter-attacks, but every time were driven off. On the same day our mounted troops, who had pushed forward to Beitunia, were pushed back, but managed to gain possession of the village of Beit Ur et Foka, the upper Beth-horon of the Bible. How they carried this village is well told by a correspondent :—

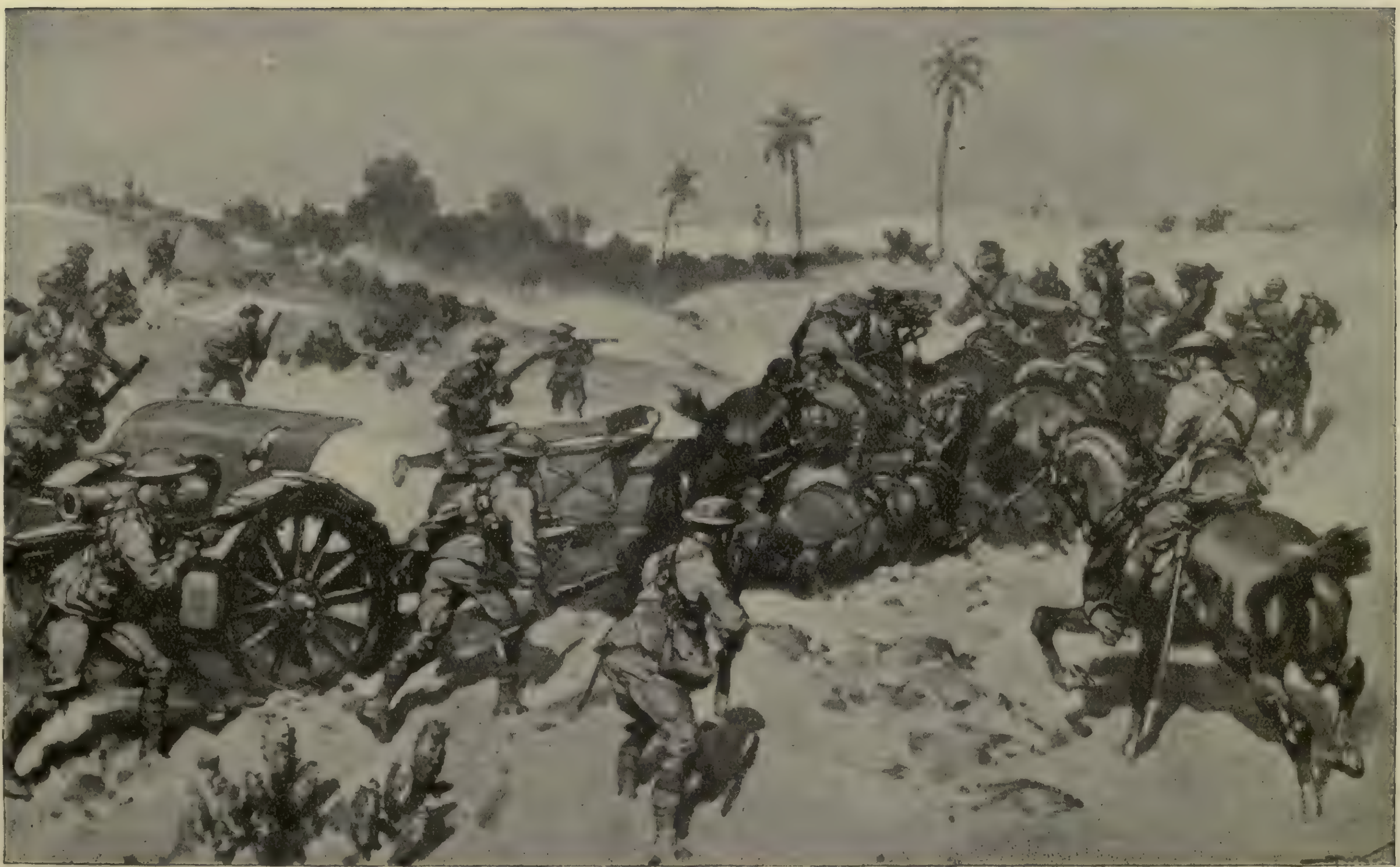
> " An officer of the Welsh Dismounted Yeomanry advanced with his company on the village, which the enemy was supposed to be holding lightly. Like most of the villages in these Judæan hills, Foka occupies the crest of one of the rounded knolls which in endless numbers extend between the coastal lowlands and the Jordan, increasing gradually in height towards Nebi Samwil and Gibeon, which, roughly speaking, stand on the watershed.
>
> " Instead of making a direct ascent, our men skirted the slope, coming upon the village from the rear. The officer, to his surprise, found it occupied by a full Turkish battalion which was standing to for evening parade, never dreaming of the approach of the enemy. Although his force was greatly outnumbered, he determined to make the most of his opportunity, and, quietly posting his men, sent forward an interpreter, who called upon the Turks to surrender. They were about to comply when a German officer shouted, " Fight it out," and led a rush. A sharp scrap followed, but was all over in five minutes, the German officer and a number of Turks being knocked out, and the remainder, numbering about five hundred, surrendering.

"As it would have taken most of the men to guard the prisoners, leaving none to oppose a counter-attack, the Welshmen now attempted to shepherd the captives towards our lines; but the neighbouring Turkish posts, seeing a big body of men descending the slopes of the hill, must have thought that they were British, for they opened a brisk fire, which caused a stampede among some of the prisoners and enabled a certain number of them to escape. Over three hundred were, however, triumphantly brought in. They outnumbered the Welshmen by more than two to one.

"A couple of days later we again captured the village, and held the position for several hours against three furious counter-attacks, which were beaten off with great loss to the enemy. Ultimately, because the position was commanded by higher ground beyond, we had to withdraw our line to its former position. In these counter-attacks the Turks employed a specially trained battalion of shock troops, only recently arrived from Constantinople. . . . They fought with admirable courage, once actually breaking into the village; but neither their training nor their courage was proof against the valour of our men, who pitchforked them out at the point of the bayonet. A prisoner said that the whole battalion, six hundred strong, had been accounted for either as killed, wounded, or prisoners."

Now move we on to 7th December. After several enemy attacks on the Nebi Samwil ridge had been repulsed with great loss, the Turks fell back to a strong line, west, south, and north-east of Jerusalem. By dint of great labour they had dug trenches some way down the slope of the last rise before the Holy City. These trenches were protected in some places by wire, and the defenders were well supplied with machine guns, while their artillery commanded the crests over which our men had to advance. Some of their big guns were posted just outside the walls of Jerusalem, in such a position that we could not reply to their fire without endangering the Holy City itself. At this juncture the weather broke down. Torrents of heavy rain fell, drenching the men to the skin, and flooding the roads, which were rendered impassable. Camels were unable to maintain a foothold on the slippery paths, and it seemed as though nothing less sure-footed than a mountain goat could scale the rocky hillsides. Nevertheless men and guns reached the positions assigned to them, thanks to the energy and efficiency of the transport service. To add to the discomfort, a chilly blast blew, piercing the sodden soldiers to the bone.

Under cover of night our troops moved into position. Dismounted Yeomanry were to attack from the north-east of Nebi Samwil, while Londoners lying to the south of the ridges were



A Fine Exploit by the Yeomanry.

(*From the drawing by H. W. Koekkoek. By permission of the Illustrated London News.*)

In this picture our troops are seen capturing a 5.9 Turkish howitzer. The incident happened during the retreat.

to push forward due east. You will remember that, while our men were encircling Jerusalem, that part of the line facing Hebron and about ten or fifteen miles distant from it had remained stationary. General Allenby had been in no hurry to attack the place; he knew that his sweeping movement would compel the Turks to abandon it sooner or later. Our troops now began to move up the Hebron road, and soon discovered that the Turks had left the city and had fallen back on Bethlehem, where their guns were so placed that any attempt on our part to engage them would destroy the sacred village.

Our lads pressed forward, and by midday on the 7th Welsh and Cheshire troops had come into contact with the enemy, who was holding a position two miles north of Bethlehem. The bad state of the road had delayed their transport; the road itself was mined, and a thick fog obscured the enemy's movements. In order to carry the Turkish trenches the Londoners had to climb down a steep slope of stony terraces, and then scramble more than half-way up a similar but higher slope on the other side. Despite the weather and the difficult ground, they managed to reach positions from which an assault could be delivered. So steep was the ground that the field guns could not be brought up to support the advance. A couple of mountain-gun batteries and some howitzers, however, did excellent service. About dawn on the 8th all was ready for the assault. One body made a frontal attack, while other detachments on the flanks rushed the Turkish works and captured them.

By seven in the morning the whole of the enemy defences to the west of Jerusalem had fallen into our hands. The Turks, however, were still holding out on their last line, which ran along the top of the ridge overlooking the city. In the houses of an outlying suburb, occupied by a Jewish-German colony, they had posted numerous machine guns, and seemed to be prepared to make a desperate resistance. The ground between his final position and the trenches which we had captured was strewn with large stones and boulders which afforded some cover. Late in the afternoon of the 8th the Londoners advanced across this cumbered ground, and with levelled bayonets charged the enemy trenches. The Turks fought stubbornly to the last, crossing bayonets with our men in many a deadly tussle. Finally, however, when the ground was strewn with their dead, they gave way and fled. Meanwhile Welsh troops, operating from the south and east, drove the Turks along the Jericho road. As our men swept through the suburbs to the north of the city, they had to run the gauntlet of fierce machine-gun fire from the Mount of Olives and from the ridge known as Mount Scopus. The storming of this ridge and the clearing of the Mount of Olives by the Welshmen who had marched north from Hebron were the last incidents in the struggle for Jerusalem. During the night the remainder of the enemy forces withdrew, and the Holy City was ready to yield to its latest and most humane conqueror.

* * * * * * *

It was during the fierce fighting round Jerusalem that the Hon. Neil Primrose, younger son of Lord Rosebery, received his death wounds. He was Member of Parliament for the Wisbeach Division of Lincolnshire, and though barely thirty-five years of age when he died, had shown great promise as a statesman. His father said of him, "Let me tell you that, having known him and loved him ever since seeing him in the arms of his mother, he has never failed me in word or deed." Soon after the war began he rejoined the Yeomanry, in which he held a commission as lieutenant, and saw service on the Western front. In February 1915 he was called home to be Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs—a post which he held for three months. When the Coalition Government was formed he resumed his military duties, but was again summoned to London to hold office in the Government. In May 1917 he accompanied his regiment to Palestine. A brother officer tells us that he fell in the second of two charges which the Yeomanry made during the advance on Jerusalem. "We were ordered," he wrote, "to take a very difficult ridge at all costs. We went part of the way, dismounted, and then when we had led our horses up we charged. . . . It was a wonderful sight. The Turks outnumbered us by six to one, but they fled." Another officer said that if there was a man animated by the spirit of the Crusaders of old it was Captain Primrose. "He had about him an old-world chivalry and knightliness which made him stand head and shoulders above every one else. . . . He was full of enthusiasm for the restoration of the Holy Land to its former glory as the centre of a Jewish kingdom, and this he ascribed to his mother's influence over his early days." His mother was the only daughter of Baron Meyer de Rothschild.

* * * * * * *

At eight o'clock on the morning of 9th December the mayor and chief of police left the town, and proceeding to the British lines with a flag of truce, offered to surrender the city. At noon the representative of the Commander-in-Chief went forward to receive the surrender. The inhabitants of the city flocked into the highway and welcomed him with loud clapping, while old women and girls strewed flowers and palm leaves in his way. The ceremony of surrender was very brief. The general gave the mayor instructions regarding the measures to be taken for preserving good order in the city and for placing guards over the public buildings.

No soldier of the King passed within the walls that day, but every inhabitant knew that the long night of Ottoman tyranny had passed, and that "Jerusalem the Golden" had been freed for Christians, Jews, and Moslems alike. They were specially grateful because the victory had been achieved without a single stone of the city being scratched or an inch of its sacred soil being displaced. Though the tumult of war had raged at its very gates, not one of the venerated monuments was harmed. Seventeen times already had Jerusalem passed beneath the yoke, and never before had she escaped unscathed. It is to the glory of British arms that the conquest was completed without the destruction of a stick or a stone in the Holy City.

At noon on 11th December General Allenby, with some members of his Staff, the commanders of the French and Italian detachments, and the military attachés of France, Italy, and the United States, entered the city. All were on foot. A guard of honour, composed of English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Australian, New Zealand, French, and Italian troops, received him. It was noticed that he entered by the Jaffa Gate, known to the Arabs as "The Friend," and not by the breach in the wall made for the entrance of the German Kaiser when he visited the city in 1898. When the party appeared and slowly paced along the streets, the populace, crowding the flat-topped roofs and balconies, shouted their welcome. Crowds lined the roadway, and many cries of "Bravo!" and "Hurrah!" were raised by men who could hardly have uttered the words before.

A correspondent saw three old Mohammedans with tears of joy coursing down their cheeks.

The procession turned to the right into Mount Zion, and halted at the Citadel. From the steps of the Tower of David, which was standing when Christ was in Jerusalem, a proclamation was read placing the city under military law, and promising that every person would be allowed to follow his lawful occupation without interruption. The greatest delight was shown as the following words were read out :—

> " Since your city is regarded with affection by three of the great religions of mankind, and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of multitudes of devout people for many centuries, therefore do I make known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary places of prayer, of whatever form of the three religions, will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faith they are sacred."

The proclamation concluded by announcing that guardians had been placed at Bethlehem and on Rachel's Tomb, that the cave of Machpelah at Hebron had been placed under Moslem control, and that the Moslem guards at the gates of the Holy Sepulchre had been requested to resume their duties in memory of the Caliph Omar, who in the old days protected the sacred place. While the proclamation was being read guns were booming to the north and east of the city, and aeroplanes were buzzing overhead.

The procession then passed along Zion Street to the barrack square, where the chief men of the city and the heads of the religious bodies were presented to General Allenby. Amongst the latter were the sheiks in charge of the mosques, and other notable Moslems, as well as the representatives of the Syrian, Greek, Catholic, Abyssinian, and Anglican Churches. After the presentations had been made, General Allenby returned to the Jaffa Gate, and left the city for his headquarters.

A correspondent tells us that the people of Jerusalem were filled with deep thankfulness that the blighting rule of the Turk had at last been banished from their land. He says :—

> " I was walking in David Street when a Jewish woman, seeing that I was English, came up and said : ' We have prayed for this day. To-day I shall sing,—
>
> " God save our gracious King,
> Long live our noble King."

We have been starving, but now we are liberated and free.' The woman clasped her hands across her breast as she spoke, and repeated, 'This is our day of liberation.'

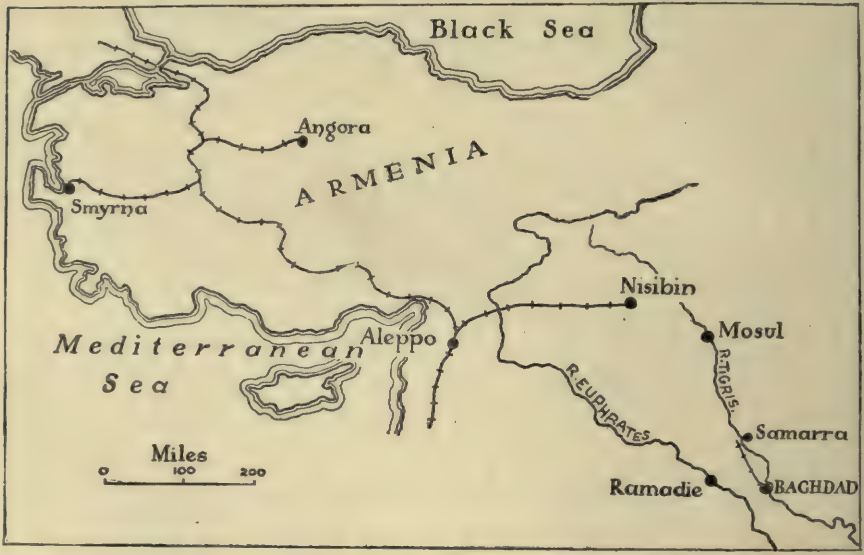
"An elderly man in a black robe, whose pinched face told of a long period of want, caught me by the hand and said, 'God has delivered us. Oh, how happy we are!' This was uttered with whole-hearted fervour. An American hospital worker who knows the people well assured me that there was not one person in Jerusalem who in his heart was not devoutly thankful for our victory. He told me that on the day we captured Nebi Samwil three wounded Arab officers were brought to the hospital. One of them, who spoke English, said, 'I can "Hip, hip, hurrah for England!" now.' He was told to be careful, as there were Turkish wounded inside; but he replied that he did not care, and again called out joyfully, 'Hurrah for England!'"

* * * * * * *

You have already heard of Judas Maccabæus, the deliverer of the Jews from the Syrian yoke in the reign of Antiochus. He met and routed several of the Syrian generals in succession, and on the 25th of Chisleu (December) 164 B.C. occupied Jerusalem, and purified the temple, which the Syrian king had profaned. Jews all over the world saw the hand of God in the strange coincidence that General Allenby had accomplished the capture of Jerusalem almost on the anniversary of its deliverance by the "Lion of Judah," more than two thousand years before.

The capture of the city was received with great rejoicing throughout Christendom. On the following Sunday countless sermons were preached on the theme, all glorying in the knowledge that at last the Holy Land had been reft from Turkish sway, and had been given into the hands of those who would rule it with justice and wisdom. There was no doubt that British prestige in the East had been greatly increased by the capture of Jerusalem, and that Eastern peoples everywhere regarded it as marking the downfall of German power in the Orient. The Sultan of Egypt, himself a Moslem, wrote to General Allenby as follows: "The entry of your troops into Jerusalem will have a resounding effect throughout the East as well as in the West. I express my admiration to you for so happily preserving the Holy Places from the ravages of war."

Undoubtedly the rout of the Ottoman army and the rapid conquest of South Palestine had greatly depressed the Turks, and, along with our successes in Mesopotamia, had put an end to the Kaiser's dreams of an Eastern empire. The Turkish army had been weakened by heavy casualties, and by the capture of more than 12,000 men. Only, however, to this extent could our success be said to have an effect upon the issue of the war in Europe. In a later chapter, when I sum up the results of our Mesopotamian campaign after the capture of Bagdad, you will learn that early in October our forces in Mesopotamia had pushed forward to Ramadie, which stands on the Euphrates, and is about four hundred miles from Aleppo in North Palestine. If Russia had still been capable of playing her part in the war, and had been holding the Armenian front, it would have been possible for our Palestine forces to link up with those on the Tigris and these with the Russians, in which case a great combined attack could have been made through Asia Minor towards Constantinople. Unhappily, the break-up of the Russian armies had made any such movement impossible. We had to content ourselves with the knowledge that Egypt and the road to India were safe, and that the Oriental ambitions of the Kaiser had been brought to naught.

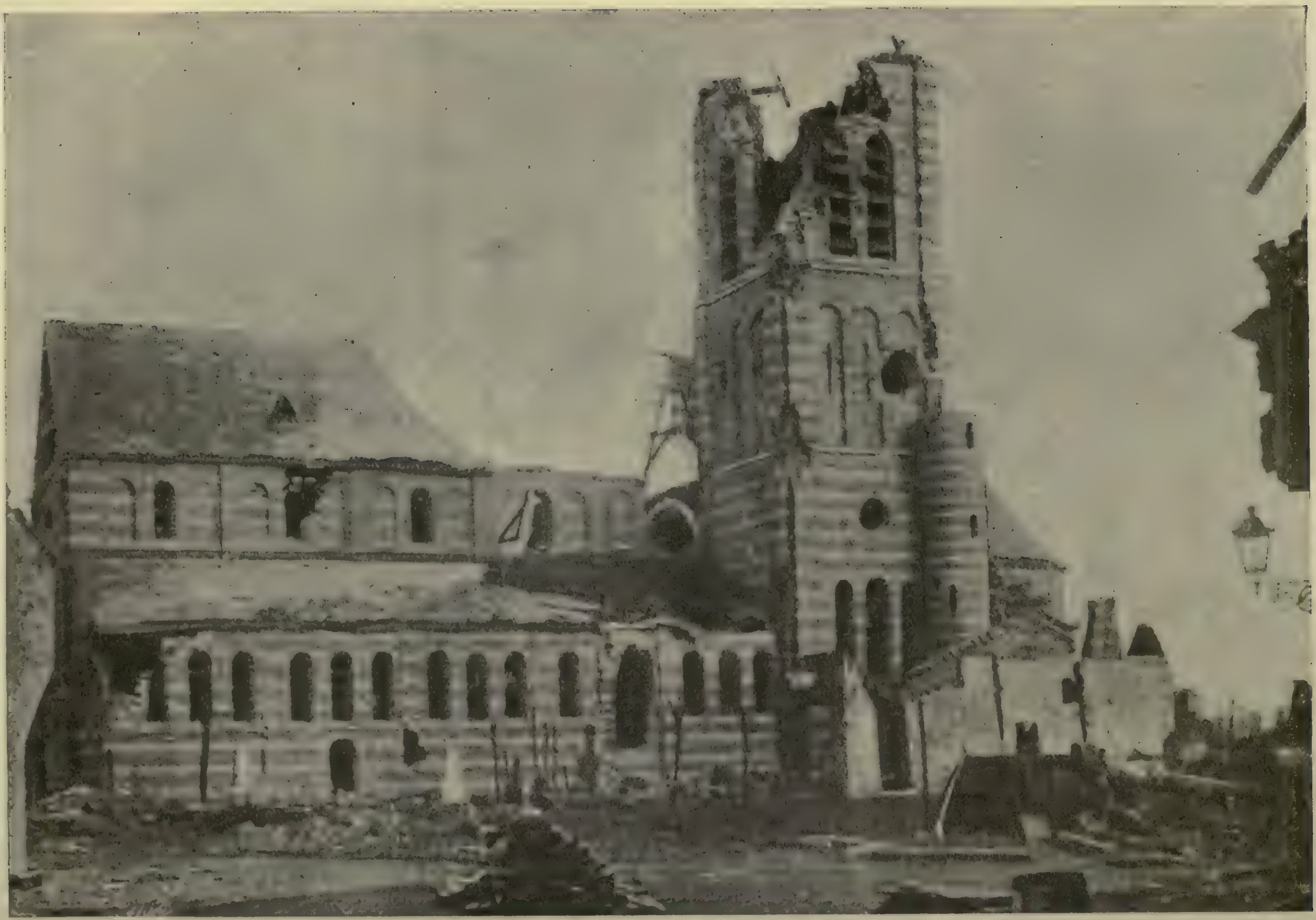

Black Sea
Angora
ARMENIA
Smyrna
Nisibin
Mosul
R.TIGRIS
Mediterranean Sea
Aleppo
R.EUPHRATES
Samarra
Miles
0 100 200
Ramadie
BAGHDAD

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CAPTURE OF PASSCHENDAELE VILLAGE.

IT is a far cry from Jerusalem to Ypres—from the bare and rugged hills of Judæa to the waterlogged meadows of Flanders. In Chapter IV. of this volume I brought my account of the struggle for Passchendaele Ridge down to 5th October. At that time, you will remember, the whole of the southern pillar of the ridge was in our hands, and further north we were pushing towards the village which stands close to its highest point. In this chapter I propose to tell you how we won the village, and thus possessed ourselves of the last stretch of high ground between Ypres and the dead level of the Flanders plain.

My story begins on 12th October, when General Gough, whose men were then near the outskirts of the village, made his fifth attempt to force his way northward along the ridge. His troops were set a terrible task: they had to go "over the top" amidst torrents of rain, with the wind blowing a hurricane, and advance through swamps in which they sank waist-deep in mud, and over ground where every shell-hole was a pool deep enough to drown a man. For a week the rain had fallen unceasingly, and every stream in the neighbourhood had long since overflowed its banks, and had converted the valleys into wide stretches of stagnant water. You cannot imagine worse conditions for warfare, and the wonder is not that we failed on this day to capture the village, but that we were able to advance at all. The survivors of the battles which I am about to describe will ever remember those nights of fierce fighting in the darkness and in the quagmires as their worst experience of war. A correspondent tells us that a padre who watched the troops struggling through the mud exclaimed, "How the Germans must admire and fear those men!"



A View of the Church Tower of Passchendaele while in possession of the Germans.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

This photograph was taken before the Canadians carried the village on 6th November. The church was then only a black mass of ruined masonry, and every other building in the place was a huddle of brick on a shell-swept height.

The attack was expected, and the enemy was fully prepared. Soon after two in the morning his guns got to work, and bombarded our lines heavily with high-explosive and gas shells, at the same time pouring streams of bullets from his machine guns on all the area where he thought our men were assembling. At 5.25 a.m. our troops advanced on a six-mile front from the southern edge of Houthulst Forest to the Ypres-Roulers railway.* There was hard fighting from the start, and more bayonet work than usually fell to the lot of our men, especially on the slope of the main ridge west of Passchendaele, and on the ridge itself south of the village. A large number of fortified farms, woods, and pill-boxes were captured, together with some five hundred prisoners. In some places batches of the enemy surrendered without fighting. A sergeant said that he saw another sergeant, with his bayonet levelled, advance all alone towards an enemy party of thirty, all of whom dropped their weapons and held up their hands. Such behaviour, however, was the exception; desperate fighting was the rule. Some of the prisoners were very young men, who made but a poor show. The older men fought well.

A correspondent tells us that north-east and east of Poelcappelle there were " pill-boxes " in clusters.

> " One such position was described to me by a wounded man as consisting of nineteen separate concrete buildings, all of which were held in strength, and packed with machine guns. Other defences in the neighbourhood were built like a street or a long continuous tunnel, with chambers opening out on the side of the advance into solid concrete. This side was banked up with earth so as to afford no target, while the rear side, which is sheer, was loopholed for machine guns. The concrete defences are of a great variety of pattern, so that the problem of attack is never the same."

As the attack proceeded the weather grew worse, and finally it was decided to make no further attempt to reach our objectives that day. The elements were too much for us ; General Mud, with his colleagues Generals Wind and Rain, could not be overcome. There was nothing for it but to wait until the weather conditions improved. We were masters of all the highest ground on the ridge to the right, and could now overlook the enemy's positions. All that remained was to grasp the last bit of the main ridge, with the village of Passchendaele and the lower spurs beyond. A correspondent gives us the following picture of the village as he saw it :—

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* See map on page 213.

> " Nearly six weeks ago I described the village of Passchendaele, which stands on the summit of the ridge, for even then we could see it. Many of its red-roofed buildings were more or less intact among the uninjured trees. Since then it has changed. Our shells have stripped and splintered the trees, and only here and there bits of pink roofs remain over the area of tumbled masonry. Our men are fighting in the awful swamp region directly under and before this end of the ridge. To the right the topmost ridge is in our hands, and we have forced our way to positions close to the outskirts of the village itself."

A lull now set in until the 22nd, when, encouraged by the fine weather of the last few days, we made another thrust forward. The night was fine and rainless, but after midnight a dense white fog settled down over the battlefield, and not until six o'clock in the morning was it possible to see for more than a few yards around. The spell of dry weather had done but little to improve the condition of the ground, which in most places was still a morass.

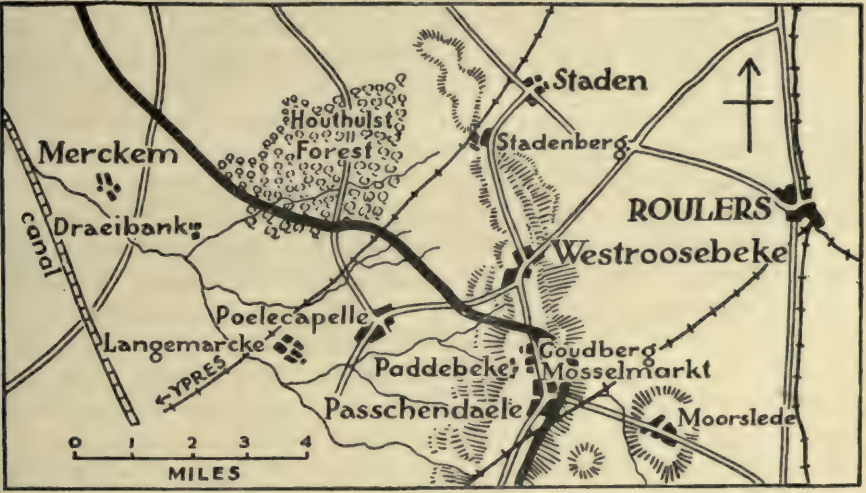
Owing to the state of the ground, it was difficult to get the troops anywhere near the line of attack. By a great stroke of daring, and by the greatest efforts on the part of carriers and transport officers, who risked their lives in the task, bivouacs were marked out in the darkness, and were carried up and pegged down under the very nose of the enemy. The men were, therefore, not obliged to lie out in the pouring rain. Before dawn the little tents were spirited away, and there was nothing to reveal to the enemy the places of assembly. Food and hot drinks were served out, and in this way the cold and horrible night was not so terrible as it would otherwise have been.

All night the enemy's guns were busy. Gas-shells came whining towards our men, bursting with queer little puffs, quite unlike the exploding roar of the ordinary shells. They belched forth poisonous vapour which the wet wind spread over the field. Many of our men had to wear their gas masks and thus proceed in even deeper gloom. To attack in such conditions would have shaken the nerves of most troops, but it only made our men angry, and all the more determined to push on.

The fine French troops commanded by General Anthoine again worked with us, and once more carried all before them.

They had to attack many strong points, and they captured them all, though sometimes they were up to their waists in water. When the day's work was done, their line ran through some of the outlying spinneys on the southern fringe of the Houthulst Forest.

East of Poelcappelle battalions of the Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Berks regiments, along with the Northumberland Fusiliers, made good headway, though the ground was very slippery. They captured a number of fortified buildings and concreted redoubts on the hill east of the village. The troops to the south-east were then enabled to advance and win valuable positions beyond the points to which they had been instructed to advance.


Staden
Houthulst Forest
Stadenberg
Merckem
ROULERS
Canal
Draeibank
Westroosebeke
Poelecapelle
Langemarcke
Goudberg
Paddebeke
Mosselmarkt
YPRES
Passchendaele
Moorslede
0
1
2
3
4
MILES

On both sides of the Ypres-Staden railway Gloucester, Cheshire, Lancashire Fusiliers, Manchesters, and Royal Scots, working hand in hand with the French, attacked across almost impossible ground, despite very heavy machine-gun fire and the shells from batteries on the other side of the Houthulst Forest. They showed great steadiness, and though strongly resisted, managed to advance some five or six hundred yards. In the course of the morning the enemy delivered a strong counter-attack which checked our men along the railway, though at all other points he was unable to prevent our progress.

Bad weather again set in; but on the 26th we made another thrust. At an early hour that morning rain again began to fall, and continued the whole of the day. Nevertheless our troops were assembled successfully, and at 5.45 a.m. Englishmen and Canadians attacked on a front extending from the Ypres-Roulers railway to beyond Poelcappelle. The Canadians advanced on the right on both sides of the small stream known as the Ravebeck, which flows south-westward from Passchendaele. On the left bank of the stream they advanced astride the main ridge, and established themselves securely on the small hill south of Passchendaele. On the Bellevue spur north of the Ravebeck they came up against a very strong point which had resisted them on former occasions. With splendid pluck and perseverance the Canadians pressed their attacks on this stronghold, and in the afternoon captured it. Two fierce counter-efforts were made upon them, but both were beaten off, and by nightfall they had accomplished all that they set out to do. On the left of the Canadians the Royal Naval Division and battalions of London Territorials also advanced. They had immense difficulties to face, for the low-lying ground which they traversed was either quagmire or flooded marsh. Nevertheless they made progress.

At the same time English troops made a dash for Gheluvelt, which they seized, and also a château, in which they took a number of prisoners. These troops might have held their gains, but the mud had choked their rifles, and when strong German counter-attacks began they were obliged to withdraw.

The French and Belgians busied themselves on this day in establishing bridgeheads across the floods of the little river which you see joining the Yser Canal to the west of Merchem. In spite of strong opposition this was accomplished, and next day our Allies pushed close up to the western outskirts of the Houthulst Forest, capturing a whole group of villages by the way. Over four hundred prisoners were taken during these operations: our total captures since 26th October now exceeded 1,200.

By this date the Italians were in full retreat, and the time was thought to be rapidly approaching when the Germans would be able to draw plentiful reinforcements from Russia. Though in ordinary circumstances we might now have suspended operations on the Ypres front, especially as we held all the high ground, Sir Douglas Haig felt compelled to continue his attacks, so as to prevent the enemy from sending some of his troops in Flanders to North Italy. Two short advances were, therefore, planned—the one for 30th October, the other for 6th November. Those renowned ridge-stormers the Canadians were now thrown into the fight. They had covered themselves with glory at Vimy and Messines, and, according to the Germans, had been wiped out at Lens. They were, however, soon to show that they were very much alive.

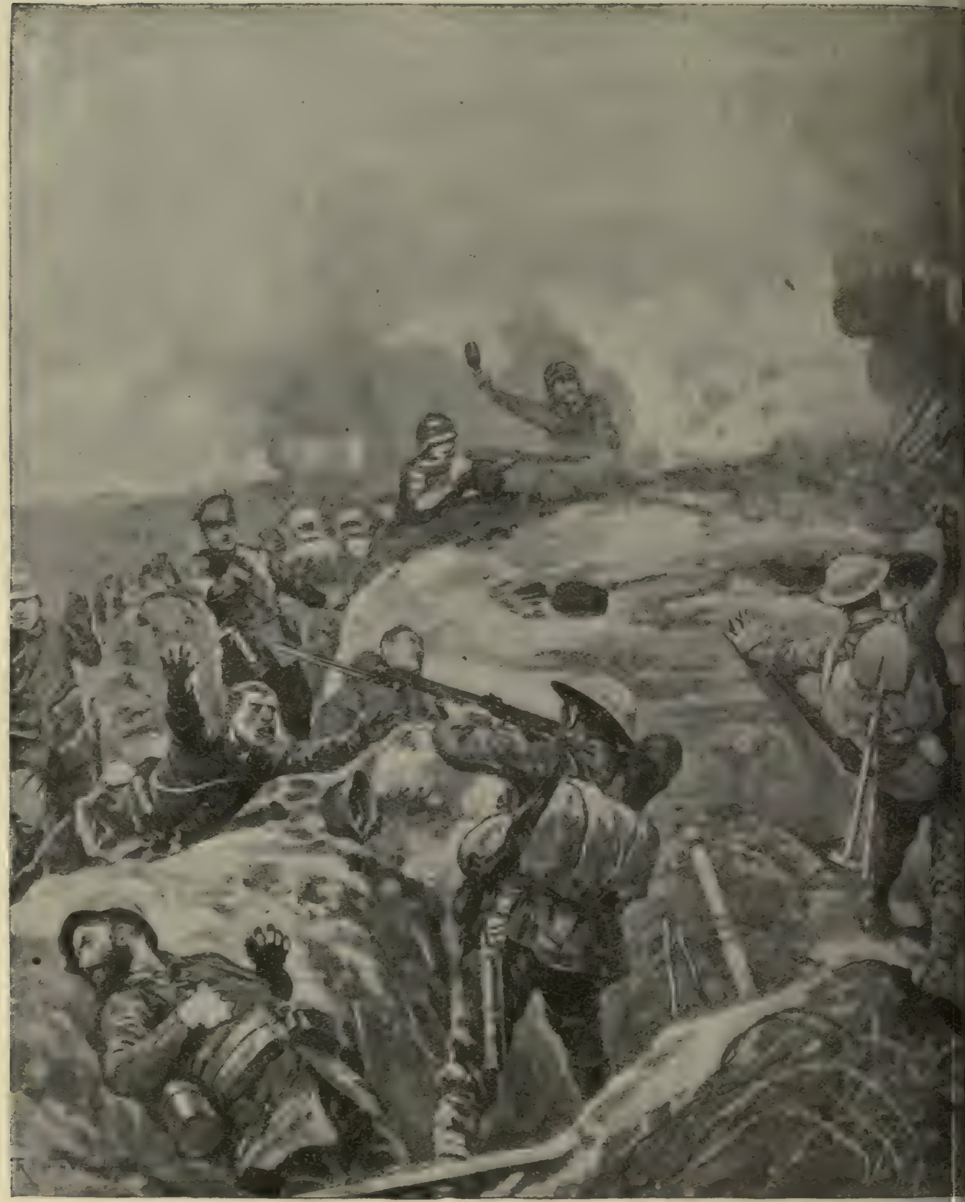
At 5.50 on the morning of 30th October Canadian and English troops attacked on a front extending from the Ypres-Roulers railway to the Poelcappelle-Westroosebeke road. On the right the Canadians pushed along the high ground, and after capturing a strong position at Crest Farm on a small hill south-west of the village, reached the outskirts of Passchendaele. The fighting was very severe, and in the course of the day the Canadians had to beat off five strong counter-attacks. In the repulse of the Germans the machine guns captured in Crest Farm played an important part.

Further north the battalions of Londoners, and men of the Naval Divisions who had taken part in the attack on the 26th, again made some progress amidst the swamps. The ground, however, was almost impassable, and a real advance could only be made on the drier ground of the main ridge. During the succeeding days other small advances were made, and hostile attacks were beaten off.

We now come to the final advance of the year 1917 in this region. On 6th November, the day on which Gaza fell, we won the village for which we had battled so long.

Prisoners informed us that Hindenburg had given orders that Passchendaele must be held at all costs ; if lost, it must be retaken immediately. If you look at the little map on page 213 you will understand why. If our troops could carry the village, they would be in a good position to advance towards Westroosebeke and Stadenberg. Once they could reach Stadenberg, Houthulst Forest would be invested on three sides, and could no longer be held by the enemy. When the forest was clear of Germans the road to Roulers would be open.

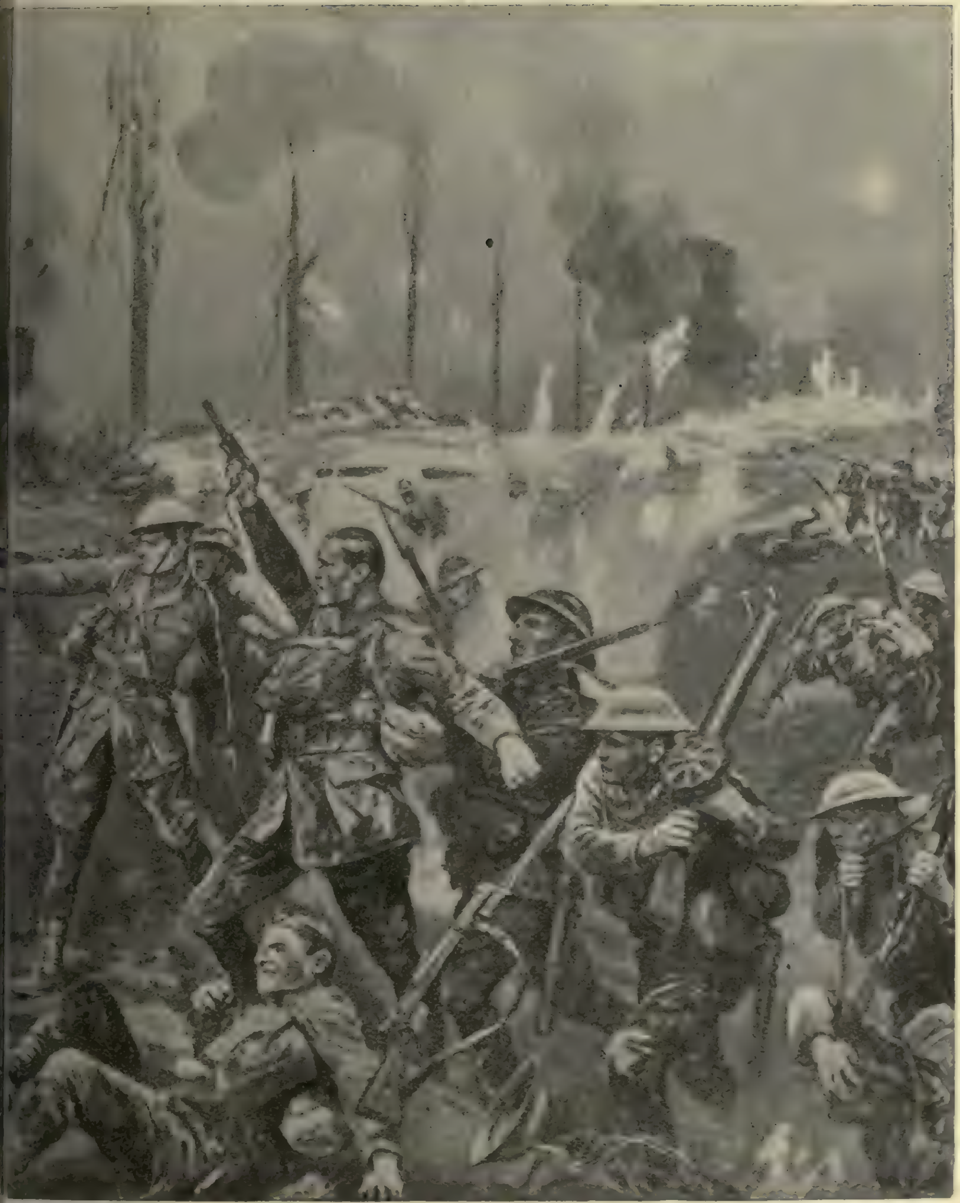
Four days of fine weather preceded the attack, but the evening of 5th November was not encouraging. The wind shifted to the south-west, and clouds began to drift across the



The Capture of Passchendaele by the Canadia

(*From the picture by R. Caton Woodvil.*

This illustration shows the attack on the ridge to the left of the village. In the background on t
success of a long series of hard hammer drives, which began on 20th September and ended on 5



rming a Pill-box on the Ridge.

permission of The Illustrated London News.

the ruins of Passchendaele Church may be seen. The capture of the village was the crowning
vember, when all the highest ground between Ypres and the Flanders plain passed into our hands.

sky, but happily the rain held off. All through the night the Germans savagely shelled our lines, and at four in the morning flung a barrage on a wide section of our front. At 6 a.m. our attack was launched, and when the men were well on their way the dawn broke in a clear and beautiful sky. The weather remained fine until half-past eight, when rain began to fall again.

> "Through the early hours," writes a correspondent, "the nearer or westward slopes were in shadow, though the sky beyond was clear and streaked with opal and rose and pale blue. But the whole expanse of shadow along the slopes was continually a-flicker with the flashing of our guns. . . . By what indomitable energy and pluck those scores of batteries were dragged through all the hideous swamp and fed with ammunition within so short a space of time I do not pretend to know. But there they were, and behind their curtain of fire our men were able to go on and enter the village.
>
> "Next to the guns, I think the most impressive aspect of the morning was the mastery of the air by British aeroplanes. The noise, of course, was great. Besides all those splendid guns in front of us, other batteries were behind us and around and everywhere, and the air was full of the roar and shriek of shells, both the enemy's and our own. But above and through it all was the constant hum of the aeroplanes as they swung and circled above the battlefield. I did not see one German flying machine, but there were never less than a dozen of ours swimming serenely against the sky, caught by the slanting sun rays that broke over the ridge.
>
> "Not far from us, on our left front, a German shell had set some store or dump of ours alight, and great red flames kept licking upwards and throwing off black clouds of smoke against the clear horizon. In all directions also the plunging high-explosive shells flung up great jets and fountains of mingled earth and water. But these were German shells, for as the day grew it became more and more evident that our shells were all being flung beyond the ridge, beyond the village, and down the slopes on the other side. The ridge itself and the village were apparently our ground, as only enemy shells fell there, or on this side of them."

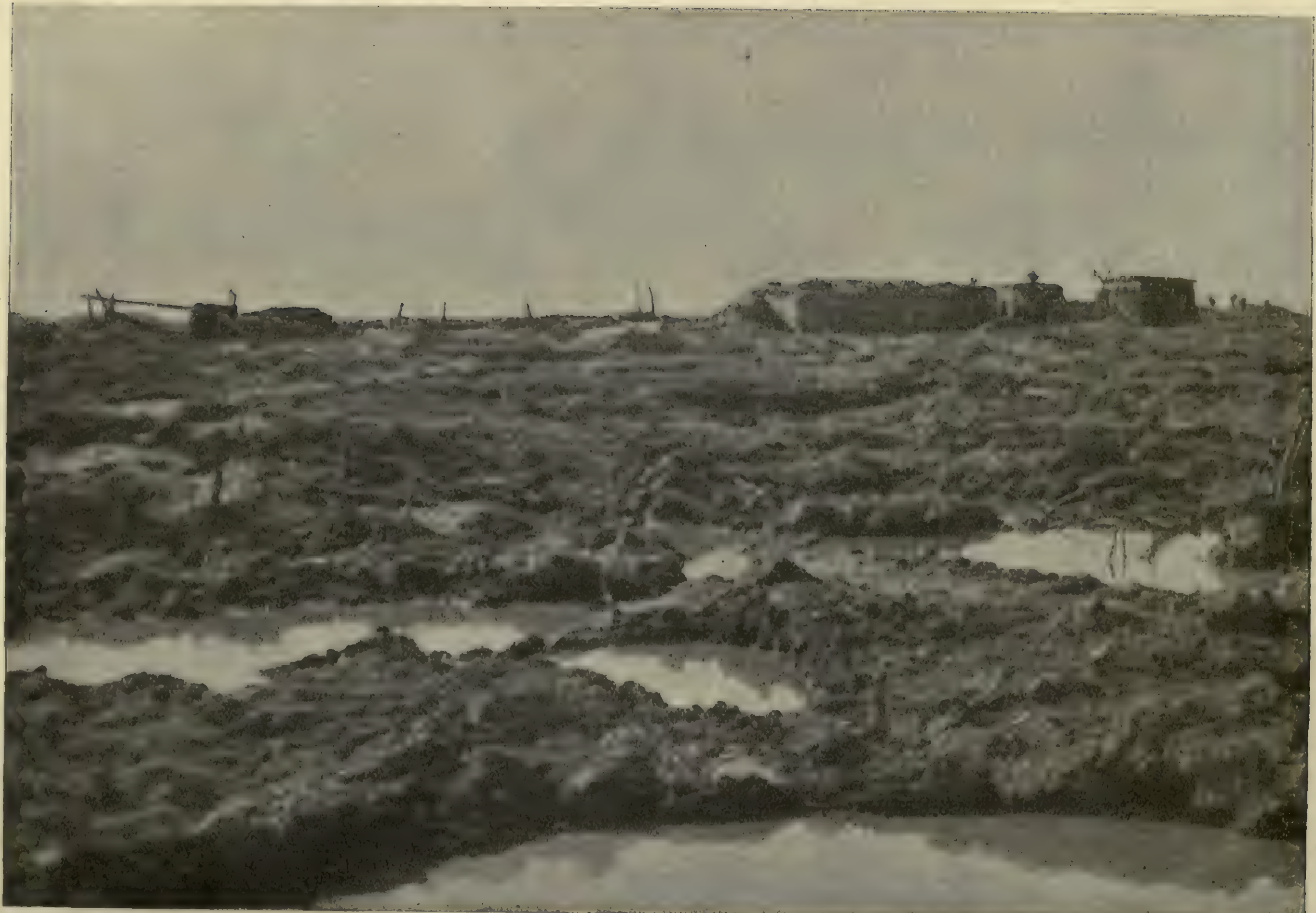
Hard fighting took place at a number of points, especially on the high ground north of the village, and on the spur running towards Goudberg, where there were many strong points and a group of fortified buildings known as Vine Cottages. Nevertheless our men made steady progress, and at an early hour a signal rocket soared up with the glad good news that the Canadians had carried Passchendaele, and had gone beyond it to a point where they had "dug in." The village had been surrounded, and carried with a rush, and the men had pushed on to the hamlets of Goudberg and Mosselmarkt, which were now in our hands. The Canadians had thus achieved a record of uninterrupted success. The whole of the ridgeway, rising 160 feet and more above sea-level, had been captured, and our men were now looking down on Westroosebeke, which lay 2,000 yards further along the ridge, as it gradually descended to Stadenberg.

A fierce counter-attack was expected; but, strange to say, the enemy made no attempt to retake the ruins of the captured village. The Canadians had seized the German officer commanding the troops in Passchendaele and the commander of a battalion in support, and they believed that the counter-attack had come to nothing because the Germans had lost their leaders. The commander of the supporting battalion, it appears, was visiting his comrade in Passchendaele when our troops burst into the ruins of the village. The two officers with their staffs took refuge in a pill-box, which was not attacked for the greater part of the day. When, about four in the afternoon, they saw no chance of succour arriving, they decided to surrender rather than run the chance of being caught and killed in the darkness.

In all, the Canadians captured some four hundred of the enemy; and when we consider that the attack was made on a front of not more than 2,000 yards to a depth of less than 1,000 yards, and that the Germans fled rather than let our men get to close quarters with them, we must consider the bag of prisoners to be larger than might have been expected. The number of dead was much greater. Not only was our shelling very heavy, but the Canadians, who are excellent marksmen, shot many of the Germans as they attempted to escape.

The chief strongholds in the village were the vaults of the church and a number of concreted cellars. These might have been stoutly held, but most of the Germans considered discretion the better part of valour, and either fled or held up their hands when the Canadians appeared. They left behind them an immense amount of material, which showed that they intended to spend the winter in this position. Immense numbers of barrels of cement, and great stores of iron rods for reinforcing the concrete used in making pill-boxes, were captured.

The whole operation was thus completely successful. It was but a minor affair, because the ridge itself is very narrow,



The Ground over which our Troops had to attack in the Ypres Battles.

(*Australian official photograph.*)

A writer says: "That human beings should have been able to cross such ground, and to win and hold the slight ridges which rise from it, is a marvellous proof of the tenacity and courage of the Empire's fighting men." A soldier writing home described the battlefield as "a congested mass of sodden, rain filled shell holes. . . . The mud is not so much mud as fathomless sticky [illegible]."

and we had no intention of advancing more than a few hundred yards. Nevertheless our gains were very useful: we were now masters of all the high ground, and were in a good position to cut off the Houthulst Forest as soon as the weather would permit us to advance again. "Passchendaele was a little place at the best, and now is almost nothing but a few heaps of ragged ruins and concreted cellars. But it is a symbol of great things. Hindenburg's order to hold or retake it shows that. With it we have the high ground of the whole main ridge."

There still remained to be captured the lower heights of Westroosebeke with the outlying hills and hummocks to the north. You will remember that there had been no counter-attack after the capture of Passchendaele; Von Armin, the German general in Flanders, had evidently decided to concentrate his men for the defence of Westroosebeke. It was against this place that our next effort was made.

Our troops were given a few days' rest, and on 10th November they were sent forward once more. The weather again was our bitterest enemy. The rain descended in torrents before the attack began, and drenching showers, driven by a biting wind, assailed our men as they advanced. Nevertheless the Canadians, reinforced by English troops, pushed forward astride the Westroosebeke road, crossed the Paddebeke stream, and stormed certain German positions. Later in the morning the enemy made heavy counter-attacks, and after fierce and obstinate fighting, which lasted for the greater part of the day, succeeded in regaining the more advanced positions which we had won.

The Germans magnified their success into a great victory, as may be seen from the following dispatch which they issued:—

> "Yesterday the crater land between Poelcappelle and Passchendaele was again the scene of a desperate struggle. The English brought up into the battle fresh divisions in order to win the high ground north of Passchendaele. His regiments penetrated our defence zone in the middle of the front of attack, and stormed the heights striven for. There they encountered the counter-thrust of Pomeranian and West Prussian battalions, and were repulsed. The enemy repeated his attacks five times. As a consequence of our effective artillery work the attackers were shattered, mostly before our lines. Where the enemy for a time gained ground, he was struck down by the bayonets of our infantry. Brandenburg troops pursued him, and wrested from him portions of the positions from which he had started."

Thus ended the Ypres campaign for the year 1917. We shall see in a later chapter that ten days after our unsuccessful attempt to win Westroosebeke we began a surprise attack to the south-east of Arras. At the first bound it carried us to within two miles of Cambrai, and set the joy bells ringing—alas! too soon—in many a British church steeple.

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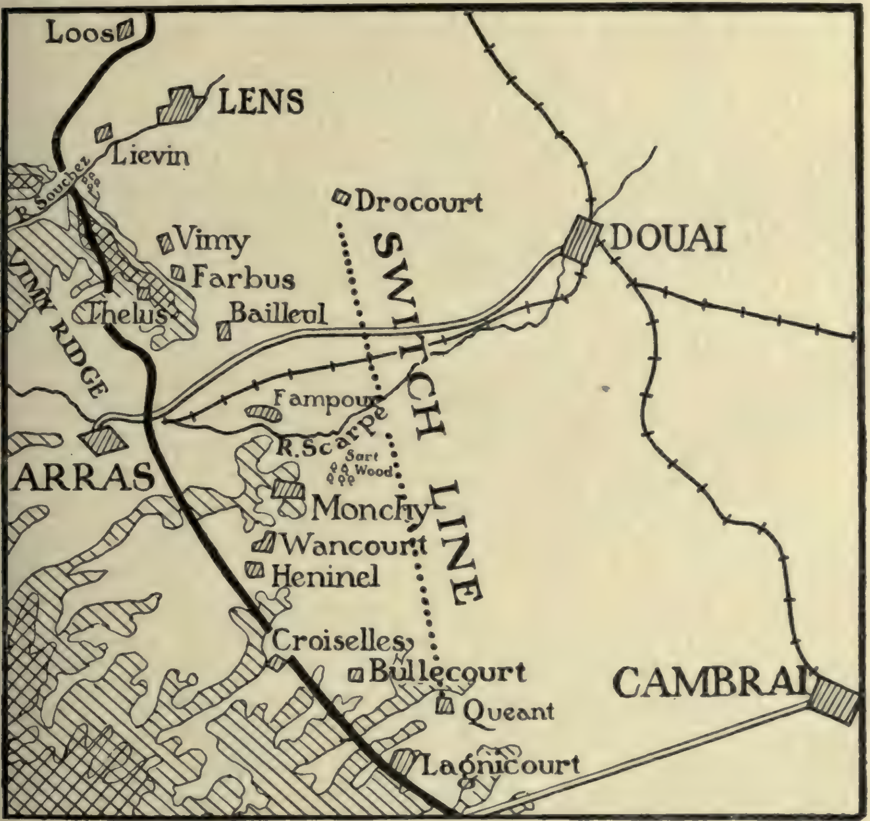
On January 8, 1918, our newspapers contained a long dispatch from Sir Douglas Haig giving an account of the operations on the Western front from April 9, 1917, when the Battle of Arras opened, down to November 10, 1917, by which date the highest ground of the Passchendaele Ridge had been won. In his report the Commander-in-Chief did not tell us much that we did not already know. Nevertheless, I propose to take you through the dispatch, because it will enable you to see what Sir Douglas Haig and his French comrades were aiming at in the various operations which they undertook. In former chapters we have been onlookers of the great offensives at Arras, Messines, Lens, and Ypres. We are now to peep into the mind of Sir Douglas Haig, and see what his object was in fighting these battles. Further, we shall be able to recall the chief events on the Western front during the year 1917.

First of all Sir Douglas Haig tells us what was the general plan of campaign laid down for the Allied Armies during the year. This plan had been decided upon by a conference of the military representatives of all the Allied Powers, held at French General Headquarters in November 1916. The general idea was to strike a series of blows on all the fronts, so timed as to assist each other by preventing the enemy from sending reinforcements from one threatened part of his battle-line to another. In the spring, as soon as the Allied armies were ready to take the field, Sir Douglas Haig was to strike hard at the salient between the Scarpe and the Ancre, into which the enemy had been pressed as a result of the Somme battle. He meant to attack both shoulders of this salient at the same time; the Fifth Army, under General Gough, was to operate on the Ancre front; while the Third Army, under General Allenby, was to attack from the north-west about Arras. He hoped by means of these attacks to "pinch" the whole salient, and thus make the withdrawal of the enemy's troops a very costly operation.

The front of attack on the Arras side was to include the Vimy Ridge, which would have to be carried in order to secure the left flank of the army operating on the south bank of the Scarpe. The First Army, under General Horne, was to be entrusted with this work. The capture of the Vimy Ridge would not only protect the flank of General Allenby's army, but, as the ridge rises to a height of some 475 feet, would rob the enemy of valuable observation posts, and give us a wide view over the plains as far as Douai and beyond.


Loos
LENS
Lievin
R. Souchez
Drocourt
DOUAI
Vimy
Farbus
VIMY RIDGE
Thelus
Bailleul
SWITCH LINE
Fampoux
R. Scarpe
Sart Wood
ARRAS
Monchy
Wancourt
Heninel
Croiselles
Bullecourt
Queant
CAMBRAI
Lagnicourt

Map showing the Hindenburg and "Switch" Lines.

Sir Douglas Haig felt sure that, even though the Germans might be forced to withdraw from the ugly salient between the Scarpe and the Ancre, they would cling to the Vimy Ridge as long as possible. He therefore meant to strike his first blow at the Vimy Ridge, and by forcing the enemy to use up his reserves, make the task of cutting off his troops in the salient all the easier. At the same time, he did not believe that successes on the front about Arras and to the south of it would make the enemy retreat so far that he would be forced out of France and Flanders. The thrust by which he hoped to do this was to be made on the Ypres front, where operations were to begin as soon as possible after the Arras offensive, and continue throughout the summer.

The positions which we had held on the Ypres front since May 1915 were far from satisfactory: they were completely overlooked by the enemy, and the holding of them involved a great strain upon our troops. Serious attacks were difficult to beat off, because the enemy had excellent observation of our positions and great advantages in the placing of his artillery. If we could capture the Whitesheet Ridge as well as the high ground running thence to the north-eastward for some seven miles and then trending north through Broodseinde and Passchendaele, our hold on the Ypres salient would be greatly strengthened, and our troops would be much more comfortable.

You now understand what Sir Douglas Haig determined to accomplish during 1917, and from what you have read in former chapters you know that he was successful in carrying out almost the whole of his plan. He tells us that he meant to put his plan into operation during 1916, but that he judged the time was not then ripe for such big ventures. In the summer of 1917, however, he had larger forces under his command, and in the Somme battle his men had shown that they could master the strongest positions held by the enemy, and reduce his fighting strength. Though his plan of campaign had been delayed, railway-building in the areas to be attacked had been going on quietly during 1916. He hoped to begin the Flanders attack early in 1917, and to strike hard in the north before the enemy realized that his attack in the south had come to an end.

CHAPTER XXII.

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S DISPATCH.

"THE best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley," says the poet Burns, and so it was with Sir Douglas Haig. In the early weeks of the year the French made new proposals for action which meant that we had to take over a part of the front held by our Allies and begin our Arras offensive early in April. Under this new scheme we were, in the first instance, to prepare the way for the French, and in the later stages to act with them. Should, however, this combined offensive not produce its full fruits after a reasonable time, the British were to strike their big blow in Flanders as originally arranged. Thus, you see, the pushing out of the Ypres salient could not be undertaken until it was seen what success favoured the new French plan.

While preparations were being made, two events of great importance took place—the withdrawal of the enemy on the eighty-mile front between Arras and Soissons, and the revolution in Russia. The retreat of the Germans, which began on 24th February and did not end until the so-called Hindenburg Line had been reached, did not trouble Sir Douglas Haig much, nor did it upset his arrangements seriously ; but it enabled the enemy to escape from the trap, and brought about a change in the part which was to be played by our Fifth Army. Instead of attacking the line of the Ancre while the Third Army advanced from the north-west, the Fifth Army had now to follow up the retiring enemy and establish itself afresh in front of the Hindenburg Line. This line, as you know, had been so skilfully drawn and so strongly fortified that it was a very hard nut to crack.

Sir Douglas Haig's task now was to attract as large enemy forces as possible to his front, before the French launched their offensive. To do this he proposed to attack Vimy Ridge, and at the same time press hard upon the Hindenburg Line. The object of these attacks was to compel the enemy to draw troops from other parts of his line, and thus make the task of the French easier.

The Russian revolution was a much graver difficulty. Even though the Russian armies might be able to fight later on in the year, it was clear that they could not play a part in the proposed joint Allied offensive of the spring. It now appeared that the Italians were not ready to make their thrust until a later date than had been arranged; so you see that the situation became very different from what it was when the conference sat. Nevertheless it was decided to go on with the spring offensive in the West. Even though the prospects of any far-reaching results were not so hopeful as they had been, it was thought that action in the West would relieve the pressure on the Russian front, and give the new Government of that country a breathing space during which it might put its house in order. If, however, as events proved, strong and orderly government could not be restored, the Allies in the West had nothing to gain by delaying their blow.

Preparations were hastened; railway construction on a great scale was pushed on very rapidly, and new roads were made. Most of these roads, which were built of heavy beech slabs, laid down side by side, proved very useful in enabling our troops to advance, and their stores and ammunition to follow them. I think you can form some idea of the vast stocks of munitions and other necessaries of war which had to be assembled and distributed. Numberless other preparations were made in the light of our experience on the Somme. Huts had to be erected by the thousand, and a sufficient water supply had to be guaranteed. This meant the setting up of many pumping stations, the laying of many miles of pipe-lines, and the construction of numerous reservoirs.

A great deal of mining and tunnelling was also necessary. Beneath Arras and its suburbs there are many underground quarries and cellars, and these were turned into safe quarters for large numbers of our men. Electric light was installed in the caves and cellars, which were linked together by tunnels, and connected with our trench system east of Arras by means

A Historic Meeting—Marshal Joffre and General Pershing.

(*French official photograph.*)

General Pershing, who is seen on the left, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the United States forces in France in the spring of 1917. By the close of the year there was an American army "of substantial size" in France, and independent lines of communication and supply were under construction.

of long subways. In order that the large numbers of troops engaged in the offensive might leave the town promptly and punctually, many new routes were prepared.

Now let us look at the new German lines against which we were to exert pressure as part of our plan. These lines ran in a general north-westerly direction from St. Quentin to the village of Thilloy, immediately south-east of Arras. Thence the old German trench system continued northwards across the Scarpe to the Vimy Ridge. Thereafter the opposing lines left the high ground, and, skirting the western suburbs of Lens, stretched northward to the Channel across a flat country of rivers, dykes, and canals, the dead level being only broken by the line of hills stretching from Whitesheet to Stadenberg.

The front which was to be attacked by the Third and First Armies on the morning of 9th April extended from just north of Croisilles to Givenchy-en-Gohelle, at the northern foot of the Vimy Ridge, a distance of nearly fifteen miles. It included between four and five miles of the northern end of the Hindenburg Line. Further north, the original German defences comprised three separate trench systems, connected by a powerful switch line running from the Scarpe at Fampoux to Liévin, a couple of miles or so to the west of Lens. This powerful belt of defence was from two to five miles in depth. In addition, the Germans had nearly completed a new line from three to six miles further east. This system, known as the Drocourt-Quéant Line, formed a northern extension of the Hindenburg Line, with which it linked up at Quéant.

Sir Douglas Haig tells us that the great strength of these defences demanded very thorough artillery preparation, and that before he could set his big guns going effectively he had to win the mastery of the air. Battles in the blue took place continually, and grew hotter and hotter as the day for beginning the offensive drew near. Losses on both sides were severe, but our airmen were so successful that they enabled our guns to do their work without serious interference. At the same time bombing machines flew far over the enemy's lines, and made raids upon his dumps, railways, aerodromes, and billets. Three weeks prior to the attack we began the systematic cutting of the enemy's wire, while our big guns played on the enemy's back areas. Night firing, shelling of the enemy's trenches and strong points, and raids for wire-cutting went on without pause;

and finally, a few days before the attack was launched, the general bombardment began. Meanwhile clouds of gas were constantly sent across the enemy's lines. Tanks were attached to each corps for the purpose of battering down strong points, and, as you know, they played an important part in the subsequent fighting.

Sir Douglas Haig arranged that the attack of the Third and First Armies should proceed by a great series of short advances, each stage corresponding with a system of the enemy's defences. When each stage was reached, a short pause was to take place in order to permit the troops engaged to reorganize for the next advance.

The dispatch now proceeds to describe the Battle of Arras, which began at 5.30 a.m. on the morning of 9th April. I need not repeat the story of the fighting. You can refresh your memory by reading Chapters XXIII. and XXVI. of our seventh volume. The result of the fighting between the 9th and the 12th was to force the enemy to withdraw from the areas commanded by the Vimy Ridge. At the end of six days' struggle our front had been rolled four miles further east, and all the high ground which it was desirable to hold before the forces were transferred to the north was firmly in our hands. If Sir Douglas Haig's original plan had been carried out, he would now have stopped the offensive, and kept up a show of activity while he sent northward the troops intended to fight in the real theatre of war on the Ypres front. But just at this time the French were about to launch their offensive on the Ladies' Road, and it was important that the British should keep up the pressure in order to assist them, and to make good any advantage which might result from their success. After a week's lull, due to the weather and to the time required for bringing up the guns, the attack went on; with what results you already know.

So far our Commander-in-Chief had succeeded in drawing the German reserves from the French front, had captured more than 13,000 prisoners and over 200 guns, and had driven a wide and deep gap into the enemy's prepared defences. The Germans had been compelled to pour in men and guns to stop this gap, while they worked feverishly to complete the Drocourt-Quéant Line. Ten days after the opening of our offensive, the number of German infantry engaged on our front had been nearly doubled, in spite of the losses which they had sustained. The massing of such large forces within the range of our guns, and the frequent counter-attacks which they were forced to make, added daily to their already severe losses.

By 5th May, the day on which the French delivered their attack on the Ladies' Road, we had captured, in less than a month's fighting, over 19,500 prisoners, including over 400 officers; and had also taken 257 guns, including 98 heavy guns, with 464 machine guns, 227 trench mortars, and immense quantities of other war material. Our line had been advanced at its greatest depth for five miles on a total front of over twenty miles, representing a gain of some sixty square miles of territory. We had greatly improved the general situation of our troops, and by the capture of Vimy Ridge had removed a constant menace to the security of our line.

Sir Douglas Haig was now able to turn his full attention to the Ypres area, where he hoped to make a thrust which would outflank the enemy along the Belgian coast and force him to retreat. The Second Army, under General Sir Herbert Plumer, was ordered to capture the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge on 7th June. Until this ridge was in our hands it was impossible to launch our offensive to the east and north of Ypres. In order to help Sir Douglas Haig to concentrate his troops in the Ypres area, the French took over once more that part of their line which we had held since the beginning of the year. Meanwhile, so as to prevent the enemy from learning our intentions, we kept up a certain amount of fighting on the Arras front. These feints met with a good deal of success, though they were not, as the Germans supposed, serious attacks. The enemy, at this time, constantly announced that he had beaten us back with heavy losses, and Sir Douglas Haig was obliged to let such statements go unchallenged. Had he denied and explained them, the enemy would have guessed that he was preparing for a new offensive elsewhere.

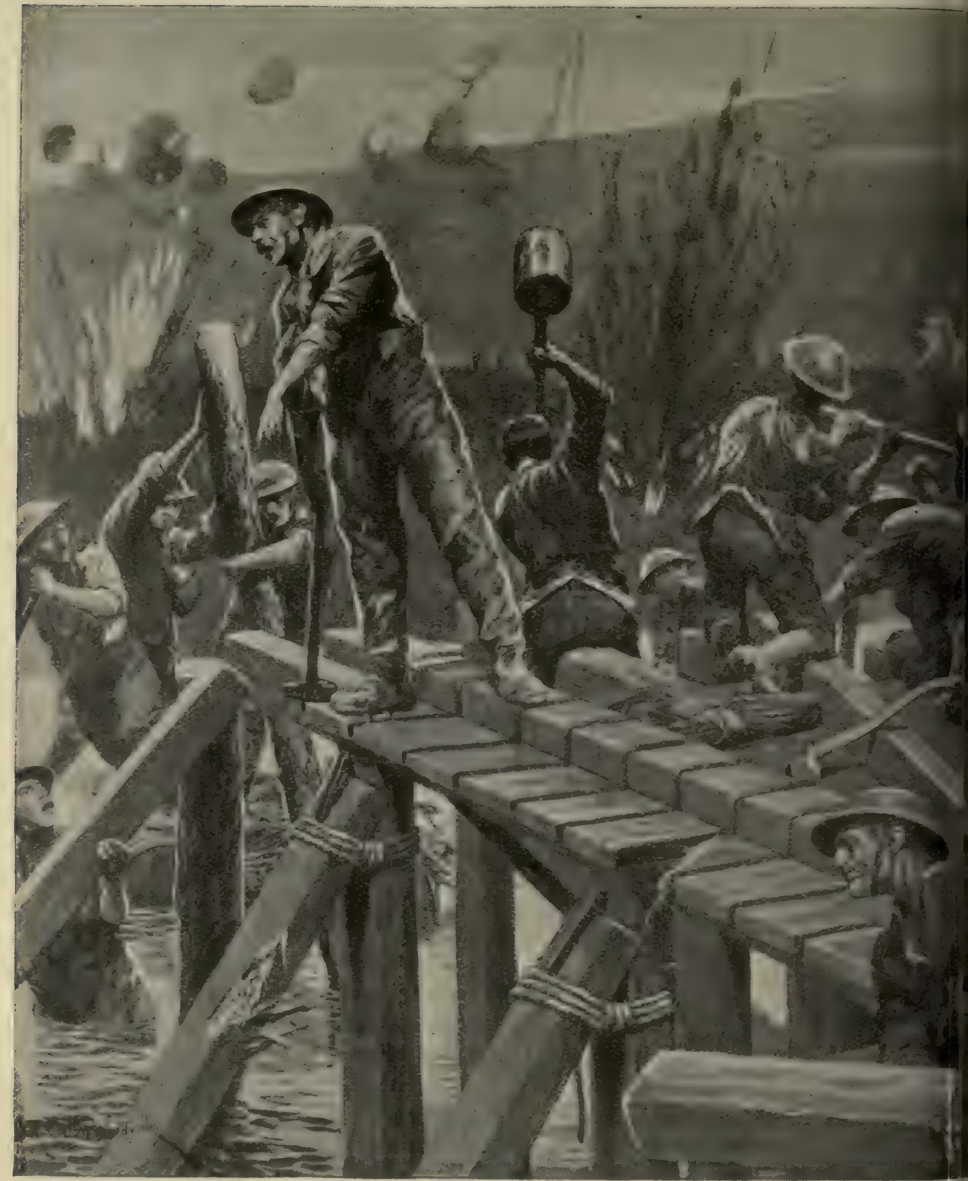
You will remember that the Australians had gained a footing in the Hindenburg Line during April, and that on 3rd May (see page 219, Vol. VII.) we made a big effort to capture Bullecourt. "During the fortnight following our attack, fighting for the possession of this village went on unceasingly; while the Australian troops in the sector of the Hindenburg Line to the east beat off counter-attack after counter-attack. The defence of this 1,000 yards of double trench line, exposed to counter-attack on every side, through two weeks of almost constant fighting, deserves to be remembered as a most gallant feat of arms." Not till 17th May was the capture of the village complete. Minor attacks, meanwhile, gave us other advantageous positions; but, as you know, troops, artillery, and stores were now rolling northward towards the Ypres salient, where the next big tussle was soon to begin.

* * * * * * *

We are now to follow the Commander-in-Chief's story of how we pushed out the Ypres salient. You will remember that the first step was the capture of the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, which was timed for 7th June. Before the attack could be launched, an immense amount of time, forethought, and labour had to be given to the necessary preparations. I have already told you that railway and road construction had been going on while the Arras fighting was in progress. Roads in the German area were mapped out even before the ridge was captured, and dumps of material for this purpose were pushed far ahead. As soon as we were in possession of the ridge, roads were carried forward with great rapidity across ground which was so ploughed up by shells that it was difficult to trace the line of the original highways. Pipe lines were extended from lakes and catch pits, and barges containing sterilizing apparatus were brought up the river Lys. Eight days after the ridge was carried the pipe line reached Messines, and between 450,000 and 600,000 gallons of water were supplied daily to the troops.

In addition, arrangements were made for transporting water, rations, and stores by means of pack animals and carrying parties. So well was all this planned that water reached the troops in their new positions within an hour, and in some cases within twenty minutes, after they were occupied. In one set of trenches the carrying parties arrived with packs and dumps within four minutes of their capture.

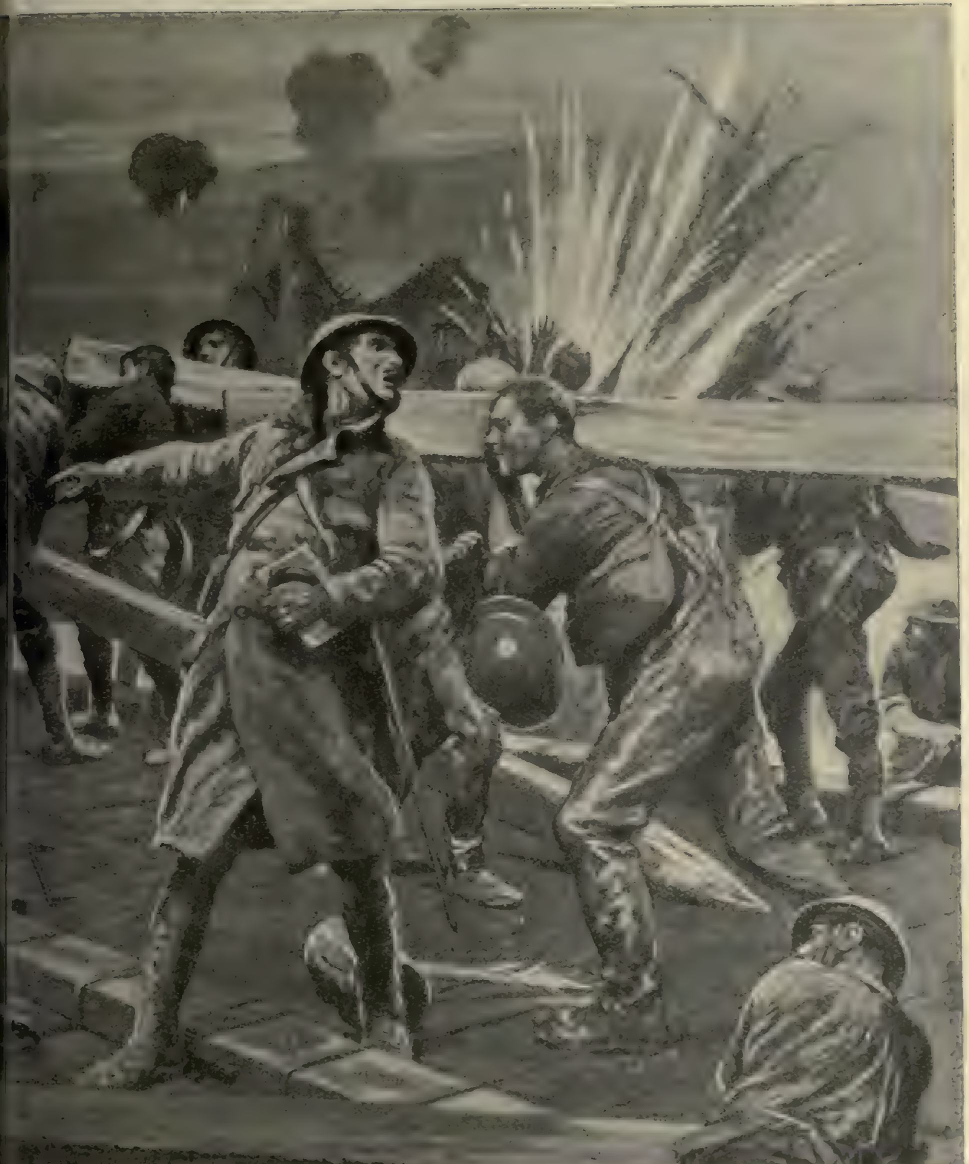
You will remember that a special feature of the attack on the ridge was the explosion of nineteen deep mines at the moment of assault. Never before had this device been adopted as the preliminary to an advance. Sir Douglas Haig tells us that the Second Army began to prepare the mines as far back as January 1916, and that the miners had many difficulties to



British Engineers building a Bri

(*From the picture by R. Caton Woodville.*

One of the most harassing tasks of our engineers was to build bridges over the numerous canal the firing line. Frequently the work had to be done, as here shown, under showers of bombs in water. A very large number of bridges had to be made in the Ypres area before the great offen **no less than seventeen bridges across the Yser Canal.**



ile under Attack from Aeroplanes.

mission of The Illustrated London News.)

eams of Flanders and France, in order to construct roads, routes for troops and supplies to advance to
emy aeroplanes ; while, to add to the hardships, many of the men had to work standing up to the waist
scribed in Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch could proceed. He tells us (p. 236) that our engineers threw

contend with. Water continually flooded the workings, and the enemy was always busy countermining.

In all twenty-four deep mines were constructed, four of which were outside the front which was finally chosen for our offensive, while one other was lost as the result of a mine blown off by the enemy. Many of our mines had been completed for twelve months prior to our offensive, and constant and anxious work was needed to ensure their safety. The enemy also had a deep mining system, and was aware of his danger.

At Hill 60 continuous underground fighting took place for over ten months prior to our attack, and only by the greatest skill, determination, and disregard of danger on the part of our tunnellers were the two mines laid by us at this point saved from destruction. At the time of our offensive the enemy was known to be driving a gallery which was intended to break into these mines. By means of careful listening we discovered that, if he continued his work at the same rate, he would just fail to reach our mines by 7th June. He was, therefore, allowed to go on with his work unmolested.

At the Bluff also there was constant underground fighting. One of the devices which military miners adopt when they are working against a countermining enemy is to sink a mine in the wall of earth between two parallel galleries and explode it so as to blow the earth into them, and suffocate or cut off the retreat of the miners. Such a mine is known as a *camouflet*.* Between January 16, 1916, and June 7, 1917, twenty-seven such *camouflets* were blown in this locality alone, seventeen by us and ten by the enemy. After February 1, 1917, the Germans showed great uneasiness, and blew off not only *camouflets* but heavy mines as well, in order to check us. One of these explosions destroyed the gallery leading to the largest of our mines, and for three months we could not reach it. We only recovered it by dint of the most strenuous efforts on the day before the Messines attack.

Some 8,000 yards of gallery were excavated in constructing the mines, and over a million pounds of explosives were used in them. They were all fired at the same moment, and the shock was more terrible than had ever before been known in the world's history. The biggest of the mines formed a crater which had a diameter of over one hundred and forty yards.

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* *Ka-moo-flay.*

Sir Douglas Haig pays a high tribute to those who carried these operations through so successfully.

I need not trouble you with the Commander-in-Chief's account of the Battle of Messines. There is very little to add to what I told you in Chapters XXX. and XXXI. of our seventh volume. As soon as we reached the line marked 9th June on the map (page 255, Vol. VII.), Sir Douglas Haig was able to make preparations for his main offensive, east and north-east of Ypres. The French had agreed to take part in the operations, and they now extended the British left northwards beyond Boesinghe. Meanwhile British troops relieved the French who were holding the line of the Yser from St. George's to the sea. All this shifting about of troops, and the many preparations that had to be made before the offensive could begin, took time, and we were not ready to make our great attack until 31st July. In the interval between the capture of the Whitesheet Ridge and the beginning of the Ypres offensive the Canadians pushed into the suburbs of Lens, and the British on the Yser suffered that disaster at Lombartzyde which I described in Chapter XXXIII. of our seventh volume. Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatch does not explain why the Navy gave no help to our men when they were so sorely beset in the narrow strip of polder and dune in front of Nieuport.

Sir Douglas Haig had intended to open the offensive on 25th July. Nearly a month before that date our flying men had begun work, and had enabled our guns to make so many hits on the enemy's batteries that he began to withdraw his artillery to positions of greater security. For various reasons the attack was postponed for three days, and in the interval our guns were moved further forward. Dull, foggy weather now set in, and our airmen could not easily discover the new positions of the enemy's batteries. A further postponement was necessary until 31st July.

As the date of the attack drew near, careful watch was kept lest the enemy should spoil our plans by withdrawing from his front lines of defence. On 27th July it was observed that part of the German line in front of the Fifth Army had been abandoned. British Guards and French troops seized the opportunity to cross the Yser Canal, which in earlier attacks had been a formidable obstacle to us. They established themselves in the enemy's first and support trenches to the east and north of Boesinghe, and all attempts to drive them out failed. During the night our engineers threw seventeen bridges across the canal. We do not know why the Germans withdrew, but Sir Douglas Haig thinks that they either wished to escape our bombardment or feared that a new series of mines would be exploded. Whatever the reason may have been, we had good cause to rejoice, for the canal would have given us much trouble to cross had the enemy elected to make a stand on the farther bank.

I do not propose to tell you all over again the story of the battles which began on the morning of 31st July and continued to the end of the first week in November. These battles have been fully described in earlier chapters of the present volume. I may, however, remind you that the weather was our toughest enemy. Sir Douglas Haig tells us that the low-lying, clayey soil, torn by shells and sodden with rain, became a succession of muddy pools. The valleys of the choked and overflowing streams were speedily transformed into long stretches of bog, impassable except by a few well-defined tracks which became marks for the enemy's artillery. To leave these tracks was to risk death by drowning, and in the course of the fighting many men and pack animals were lost in this way. The shocking bad weather was of great advantage to the enemy. While we were waiting for the ground to recover, he was busy strengthening his defences and bringing up reinforcements. The " pill-boxes " which figure so largely in accounts of the Yser battles were erected, we are told, because no deep dug-outs could be made in soil where water lay within a few feet of the surface. The enemy was thus forced to construct in the ruins of farms and in other suitable places field forts of reinforced concrete many feet thick. As you already know, these redoubts were distributed all along the front of our advance, and were a serious obstacle to our progress. They were heavily armed with machine guns, and manned by men who were determined to hold on at all costs. Many of the pill-boxes were reduced as our troops advanced, but others resisted for a considerable time, and delayed the arrival of our supports. Pill-boxes and bad weather were the chief features of the Ypres struggle during the year 1917.

The dispatch concludes with a general review of the situation as it was on 25th December, when Sir Douglas Haig laid down his pen. He reminds us that the Ypres offensive had only been maintained for three and a half months, during the worst of weather, by the almost superhuman exertions of his troops. The enemy had done his utmost to hold his ground, and in his efforts to do so had used up no less than seventy-eight divisions, of which eighteen had been engaged a second and a third time, after having been withdrawn to rest and refit.

Though the enemy had made such tremendous efforts, it was the state of the ground and the weather, rather than his resistance, which checked our progress, and prevented us from winning the whole of the Passchendaele Ridge right up to Staden. Had the month of August 1917 been as fine as usual, we should probably have captured the whole ridge within the space of a few weeks. Our men advanced every time with the fullest confidence in their power to overcome the enemy, even though they had to struggle through mud up to their waists to reach him. Whenever they could reach him they overcame him, but physical exhaustion placed narrow limits on the depth to which each advance could be pushed, and compelled long pauses between the advances. The full fruits of each success were, therefore, not always obtained. Time after time, when the enemy was practically beaten, he was able to bring up reinforcements behind the sea of mud which formed his main protection.

Yet, in spite of all difficulties, much was achieved. Our captures between 24th July and 25th December amounted to 24,065 prisoners, 74 guns, 941 machine guns, and 138 trench mortars. It is certain that the enemy's losses were far greater than our own. Most important of all, our new and hastily trained armies had proved that they could meet and beat the enemy's best troops, even under conditions which strongly favoured them.

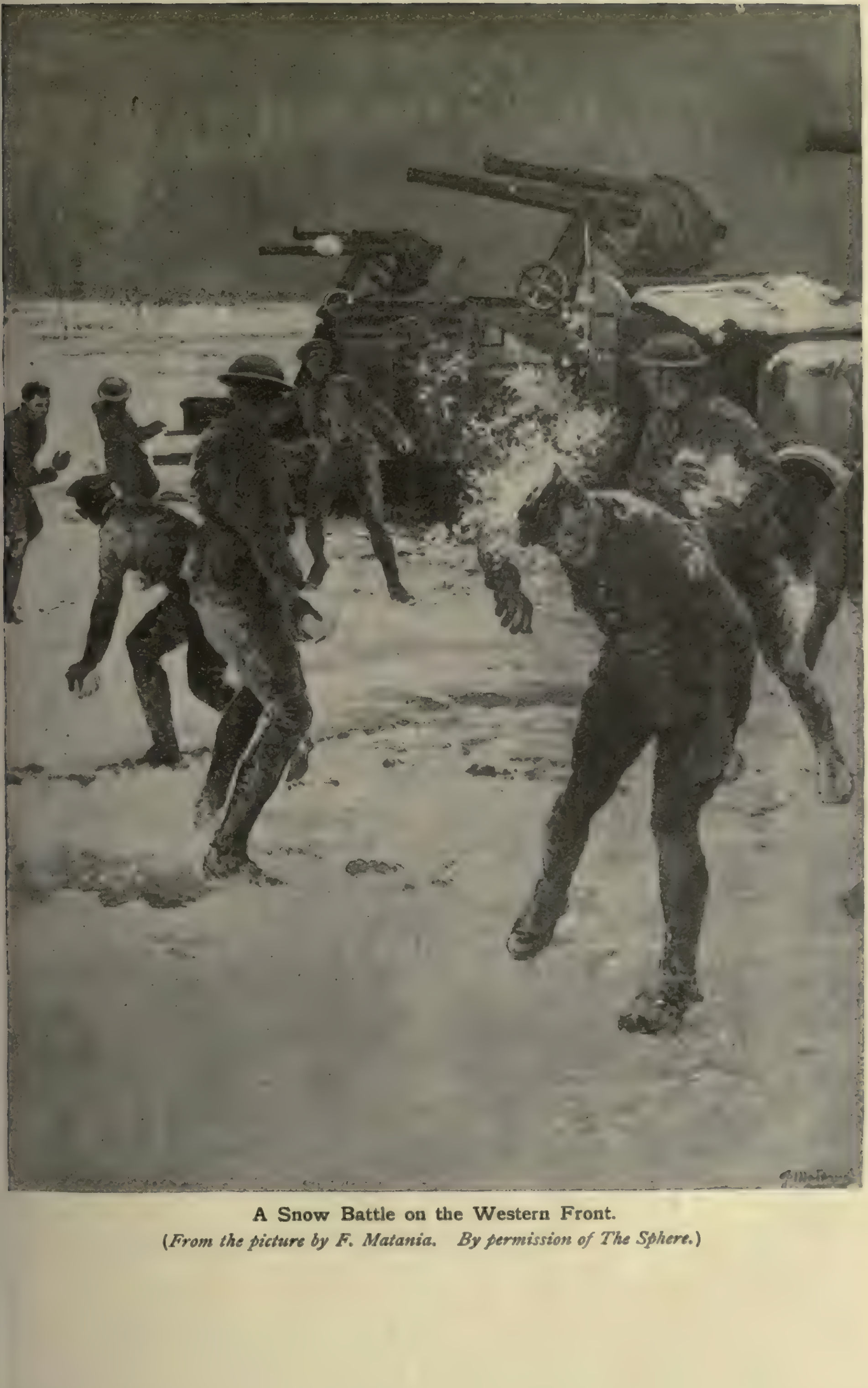
I have already told you that the general conditions of the struggle during 1917 were widely different from those which the Allied commanders had in mind when they met in October 1916. The great series of blows which was to be delivered on all the fronts at the same time never took place. Though Russia made a fine effort in July, she subsequently went all to pieces, and failed to prevent the enemy from transferring many fresh divisions from the Eastern front and replacing them with tired soldiers who had been worn out in the Western fighting. Then, again, the combined French and British offensive in the spring had to be delivered before the Italians were ready, and this made the task of the Western Allies far heavier than it would have been had Russia remained staunch and had Italy been prepared.

In spite of these drawbacks, we won notable victories at Arras, Vimy, Messines, and in Flanders; while the French triumphed at Moronvilliers, Verdun, and Malmaison. These successes, achieved by the British and French working in close touch, constitute a record of which the Allied armies have every reason to be proud. The British took their full share of the fighting, and, save for such short intervals as were enforced by the weather, maintained a vigorous offensive for months. No other example of offensive action on so large a scale, and continued for so long a time and so successfully, had hitherto been furnished by the war. In the operations at Arras, Messines, Lens, and Ypres, no less than 131 German divisions were engaged, and were defeated by less than half that number of British divisions. In Sir Douglas Haig's opinion we had every reason to be satisfied with the results of the year's fighting.

The addition of strength which the enemy had obtained, or was to obtain, from events in Russia and Italy had already been discounted, and the day of destruction of the enemy's field forces had been brought much nearer.

An estimate of the number of German troops set free for service on the Western front by the break-up of Russia was made by Sir Auckland Geddes, the new Minister of National Service, in his speech before the House of Commons on January 14, 1918. In his opinion the Germans would be able to bring to the Western front about 1,600,000 men. Nevertheless, he assured the House that the man power of the Allies and of America, actually in arms or in reserve in civil life, was sufficient to assure victory. Britain alone had raised 7½ millions of men, the numbers from the different parts of the Empire being as follows:—

England	4,530,000,	or 60.4 per cent.
Scotland	620,000	,, 8.3 ,,
Wales	280,000	,, 3.7 ,,
Ireland	170,000	,, 2.3 ,,
Dominions and Colonies	900,000	,, 12.0 ,,
India, Africa, and other Dependencies . .	1,000,000	
Total . .	7,500,000	



A Snow Battle on the Western Front.
(From the picture by F. Matania. By permission of The Sphere.)

The Commander-in-Chief concludes his dispatch with sincere and hearty thanks to every branch of the service, and to our French, Belgian, Portuguese, and American allies. "Already," he writes, "many thousands of American soldiers are in France. Warm as is the welcome which they have received from the French people, nowhere will they find a more genuine or a more friendly greeting than among all ranks of the other great English-speaking armies."

A few days later Mr. Baker, the United States Secretary for War, gave us some further information as to Americans in France. He said that already the United States had in France "an army of substantial size ready for active service." Independent lines of communication and supply were being constructed, and arms of the most modern and effective kind were being provided. There was an army of nearly one and a half millions in the field or in training at home or abroad. No army of a similar size had ever been raised, equipped, and trained as quickly in the history of the world. The total number of men already on military service was one and a half times as large as any force ever mobilized by the American nation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SUPREME AWARD OF VALOUR.—I.

BETWEEN 20th November 1917 and the close of that year thirty Victoria Crosses were awarded to heroes who had specially distinguished themselves in the Ypres battles. In reading the stories of these supremely gallant men, you will discover that very many of them displayed outstanding courage and resource in the capture of "pill-boxes." Bear in mind when you are reading the accounts of their heroism that they were fighting for the most part in the midst of drenching rain, and almost always struggling through the liquid mud of swamps and the standing water of floods. Nothing daunts a man more than bitter wind, pitiless rain, and deep mire. Your admiration for these heroes will be increased if you consider the difficult and depressing conditions under which their valorous deeds were performed. You will notice that six Australians and three Canadians find a place in this proud record. The first name on my list is that of

Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis Pugh Evans, D.S.O., Royal Highlanders.

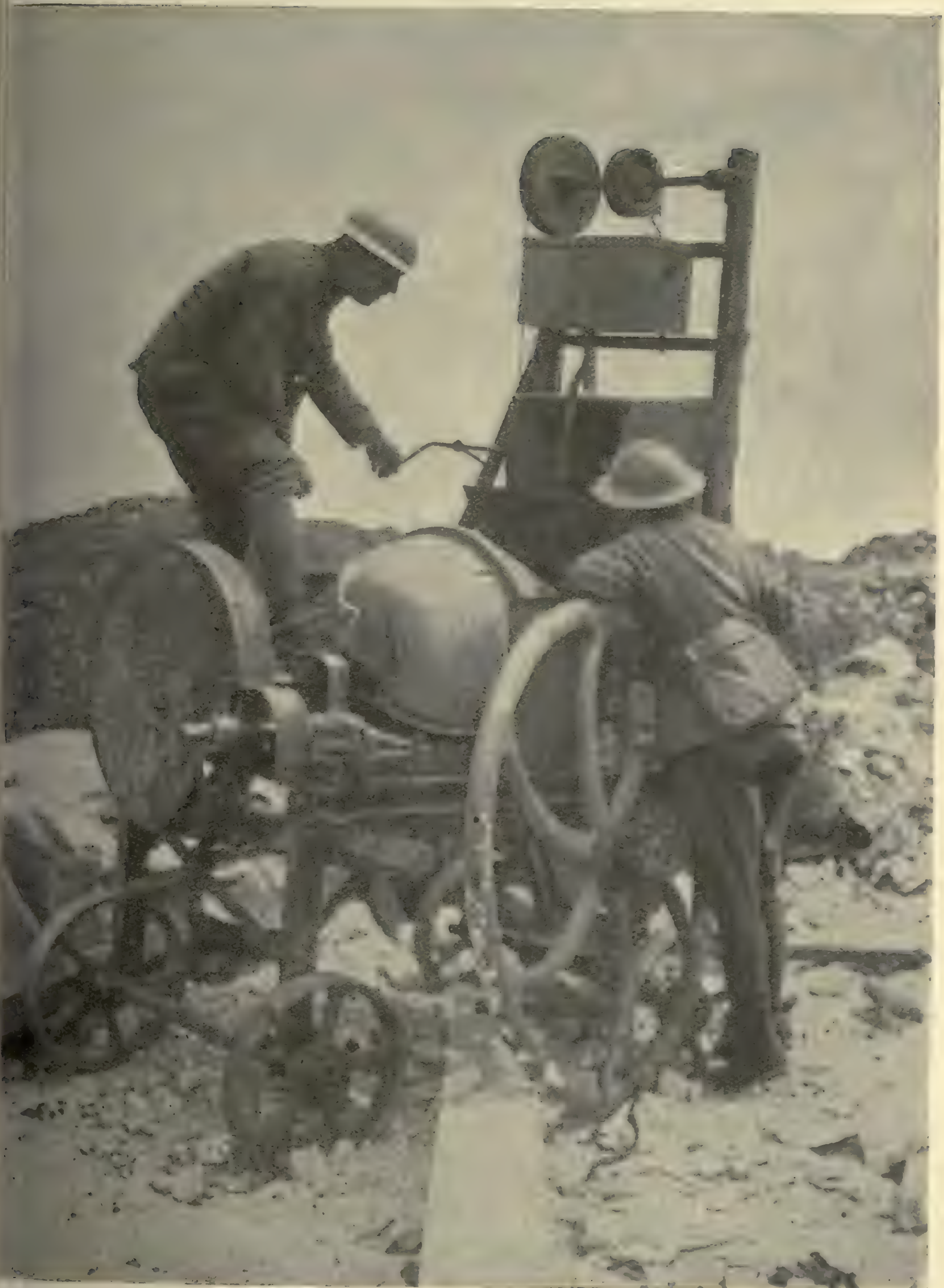
On the occasion when Colonel Evans won the highest award of valour he was commanding a battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment. He took this battalion in perfect order through a terrific enemy barrage, and then, having formed up all units, led them to the assault. A strong machine-gun post held up his men, and while some of them were working round its flank the gallant colonel rushed straight at the little fort, reached a loophole safely, and fired his revolver through it, thus forcing the garrison to surrender. When the first objective was captured he was severely wounded in the shoulder. Nevertheless he refused to be bandaged, and "carried on" with splendid pluck and resolution. He re-formed his men, pointed out to them the positions which they were to capture, and once more led them onwards. Again he was badly wounded, but again he refused to give up his command. When he reached the second objective and the position was being strengthened, he fell fainting from loss of blood. When he recovered consciousness he saw many of his men in similar plight, and, refusing assistance, painfully made his way alone to a dressing station. With a commander of such cool bravery you may be sure that there was no lack of valour and spirit in his battalion.

SERGEANT WILLIAM FRANCIS BUIMAN, Rifle Brigade.

This gallant sergeant, who hailed from Stepney, won the proud decoration when his company was held up by an enemy machine gun which was firing at point-blank range. Shouting to his men to lie down and take cover, he rushed forward alone to what seemed certain death, but happily reached the gun unscathed. He killed the enemy gunner, and, shouldering the weapon, called upon his men, who followed him to the position which they were to capture. There he speedily got the gun into working order, and turned it against the Germans with great effect. By this most gallant deed he assured the progress of the attack. Fifteen minutes later he noticed that the battalion on his right was being enfiladed by a party of about forty of the enemy. Accompanied by two of his men he ran forward and got into the rear of the attacking Germans, with the result that he killed six of them, and captured two officers and twenty-nine men of other ranks.

SERGEANT JOHN JAMES DWYER, Australian Machine-Gun Corps, Australian Imperial Force.

Sergeant Dwyer, in charge of a Vickers machine gun, went forward with the first wave of his brigade. After the final objective had been won he pushed his gun forward in advance of the captured position, in order to gain possession of a commanding spot on which he might place his weapon. While advancing he noticed an enemy machine gun firing on our right flank and doing considerable mischief among our men. Without a moment's hesitation he rushed his gun forward to within thirty yards of the enemy gun, and fired point-blank at it, putting it out of action and killing the crew. He then seized the gun, and running the gantlet of snipers from the rear of the enemy position, carried it back across the shell-swept ground



A German Concrete-Mixer captured by our Troops.

(*Canadian official picture.*)

The machine which the soldiers are examining with interest is a German device for making concrete for the construction of pill-boxes.

to our front line. He then set up his two guns on the right flank of his brigade, and worked them with great effect. When the Germans counter-attacked he rendered great assistance in driving them off.

Next day, when the position was being heavily shelled, he shifted his guns from position to position to avoid the enemy's fire. At last his Vickers gun was blown up, and he was forced to retire. He led his team back to headquarters through the enemy barrage, secured one of the reserve guns, and rushed back with it to his old position, where he " carried on " in fine style. The official record thus concludes : " During the whole of the attack his contempt for danger, his cheerfulness and courage, raised the spirits of all who were in his sector of the line."

SERGEANT JOSEPH LISTER, Lancashire Fusiliers.

Sergeant Lister, who was a native of Cheshire, was advancing with his company, when it was assailed by galling machine-gun fire from two pill-boxes. He saw at once that unless the guns were silenced the advance would be held up, and our troops would not be able to go forward with the barrage that preceded and protected them. Without a thought for himself he dashed ahead of his men, and discovered a machine gun firing from a shell-hole in front of one of the pill-boxes. He shot two of the enemy gunners, and the rest of the team surrendered. Then he went on to the pill-box, and shouted to the occupants to surrender. They did so, with the exception of one man, whom he shot dead. Imagine his amazement when suddenly about a hundred Germans came out of the shell-holes farther in the rear and held up their hands. Sergeant Lister's prompt courage enabled our line to advance with hardly a check, and permitted his comrades to proceed along with their protecting barrage. Delay would probably have meant the failure of the whole attack.

SERGEANT LEWIS M'GEE, Australian Imperial Force.

Sergeant M'Gee was in command of a platoon which he led with great dash and bravery to the final objective, though strongly opposed by rifle and heavy shell fire. His men fell fast around him, and they could advance no further because a stream of bullets rained down upon them from a pill-box. Single-handed, and armed only with a revolver, he rushed the post, shot some of the crew, captured the rest, and thus enabled his comrades to proceed. He reorganized his men, and in the coolest possible fashion led them on to the final objective, where he set them to work strengthening the position which had been won. Unhappily this splendid non-commissioned officer was afterwards killed in action.

SERGEANT JOHN MOLYNEUX, Royal Fusiliers.

Sergeant Molyneux, who hailed from the Lancashire town of St. Helens, was advancing with his comrades when machine guns opened fire, and caused many casualties. At once the sergeant organized a bombing party, and led it forward to clear a trench which lay in front of a fortified house. So skilfully did he and his men throw their bombs that many of the enemy were killed, and a machine gun was captured. This obstacle having been cleared, the sergeant jumped out of the trench, and calling upon some of his men to follow him, rushed for the house. He was the first in, and when his comrades arrived they found him in the thick of a hand-to-hand tussle. It was soon over; the enemy surrendered, and between twenty and thirty prisoners were taken. The sergeant's dash and resource prevented the check from becoming a serious block to the advance, and his capture of the machine guns averted much loss of life.

LANCE-SERGEANT JOHN HAROLD RHODES, Grenadier Guards.

This gallant Guardsman, who was a native of Tunstall in Staffordshire, had charge of a Lewis gun, with which he was covering his comrades while they strengthened a captured position. While he was working his gun he noticed three of the enemy leave a pill-box in front. At once he went out single-handed, pushed through our own barrage and the fire of hostile machine guns, and burst into the concreted redoubt. No fewer than nine Germans surrendered to him. One of them was a forward observation officer, who was in telephonic communication with his battery. Along with his prisoners the gallant sergeant brought back valuable information.

CORPORAL ERNEST ALBERT EGERTON, Notts and Derby Regiment.

Our attack was going forward amidst such dense fog and smoke that the two leading waves passed over certain enemy dug-outs without noticing them. These dug-outs were manned by riflemen and machine gunners, who popped us as soon as our men were well ahead, and fired into their rear with deadly effect. Volunteers were called for to clear out the dug-outs; and while they were coming forward Corporal Egerton with reckless bravery jumped up and dashed for the dug-outs under heavy fire at short range. In less than thirty seconds three of the enemy—a sniper, a bomber, and a gunner—had fallen to successive shots from his rifle. By this time some of the volunteers had joined him, and the Germans were surrendering. Twenty-nine of them were captured. The official account says that Corporal Egerton's gallantry was beyond all praise.

ACTING-CORPORAL FRED GREAVES, Notts and Derby Regiment.

Another heroic North Midlander now writes his name on our proud record. His platoon was held up in the usual way by machine-gun fire from a pill-box. Our barrage was creeping forward, and delay meant that our men would lose its protection. Realizing this, Corporal Greaves and another non-commissioned officer rushed round to the rear of the little fort, and, escaping the enemy's bullets by a miracle, flung bombs into the building, with the result that the garrison was either killed or captured, and their four machine guns were secured. As soon as the pill-box was reduced the line was able to advance.

Later in the afternoon a very critical situation arose. The Germans heavily counter-attacked one of our flank brigades, and certain troops gave way under the strain. All the officers of our corporal's company were out of action, and there was no one to take command and avert the danger which threatened the whole line. Corporal Greaves sprang into the breach. He collected his men, threw out extra posts on the threatened flank, and opening up rifle and machine-gun fire which enfiladed the advancing Germans, saved the situation. Corporal Greaves that day proved himself a born leader of men, and his splendid example inspired his comrades with a like gallantry and determination.

ACTING-CORPORAL FILIP KONOWAL, Canadian Infantry.

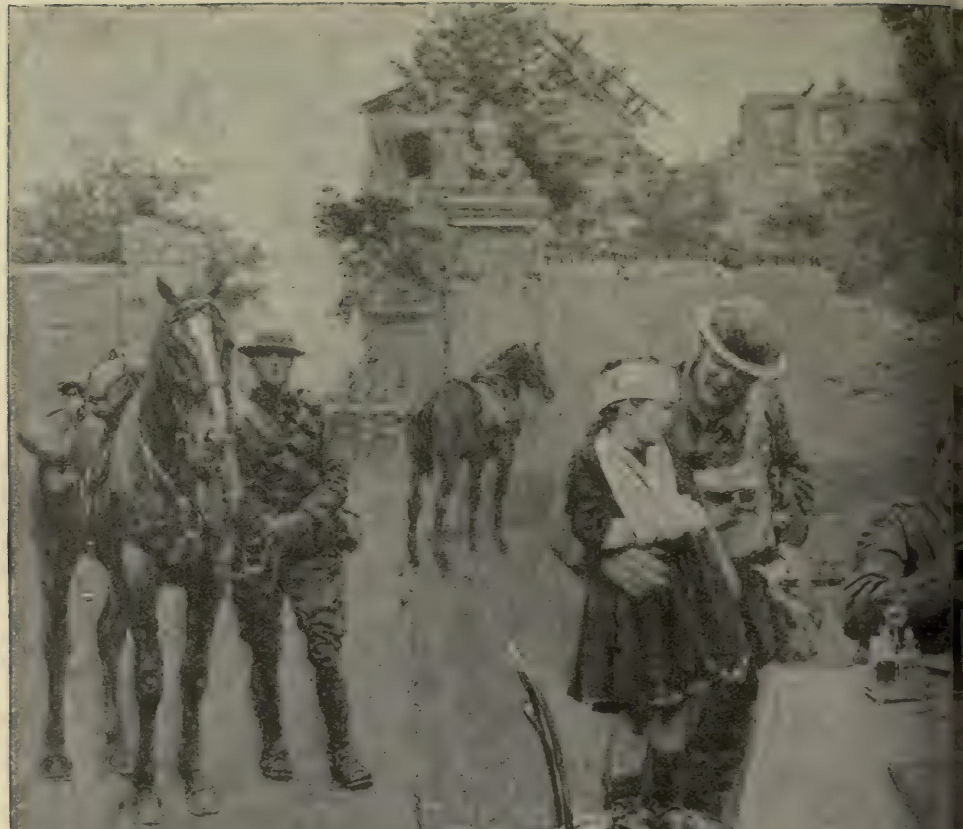
The section to which this fine soldier was attached had been given the difficult task of clearing out cellars, craters, and machine-gun emplacements occupied by the enemy. He and his comrades had to push into dark passages underground and fight single-handed combats like the heroes of old. In one cellar he himself bayoneted three of the enemy, and in a crater routed seven others, all of whom he killed. When this "mopping-up" work was done he followed his company, and seeing an emplacement containing a machine gun which was holding up the right flank, rushed at it, killed the crew, seized the gun, and carried it back to our lines. Next day he repeated the exploit. Still "on his own," he rushed another machine-gun emplacement, killed three of the crew, destroyed the gun, and blew up the post with explosives. Thus he accounted for at least sixteen of the enemy during two days of hard fighting. He did not cease his good work until he was severely wounded.

Lance-Corporal William Henry Hewitt, South African Infantry.

Lance-Corporal Hewitt was another pill-box hero. Along with his section he attacked a concreted redoubt, and tried to rush the doorway. The men inside made a stubborn resistance, and Hewitt received a severe wound. Nevertheless he made his way to the loophole, and while trying to throw a bomb through it, was again wounded, this time in the arm. Still determined to make good, he persevered, and at last got a bomb inside, with the result that the occupants were forced to rush out into the open, where they were successfully and speedily dealt with by our men.

Lance-Corporal Harold Mugford, Machine-Gun Corps.

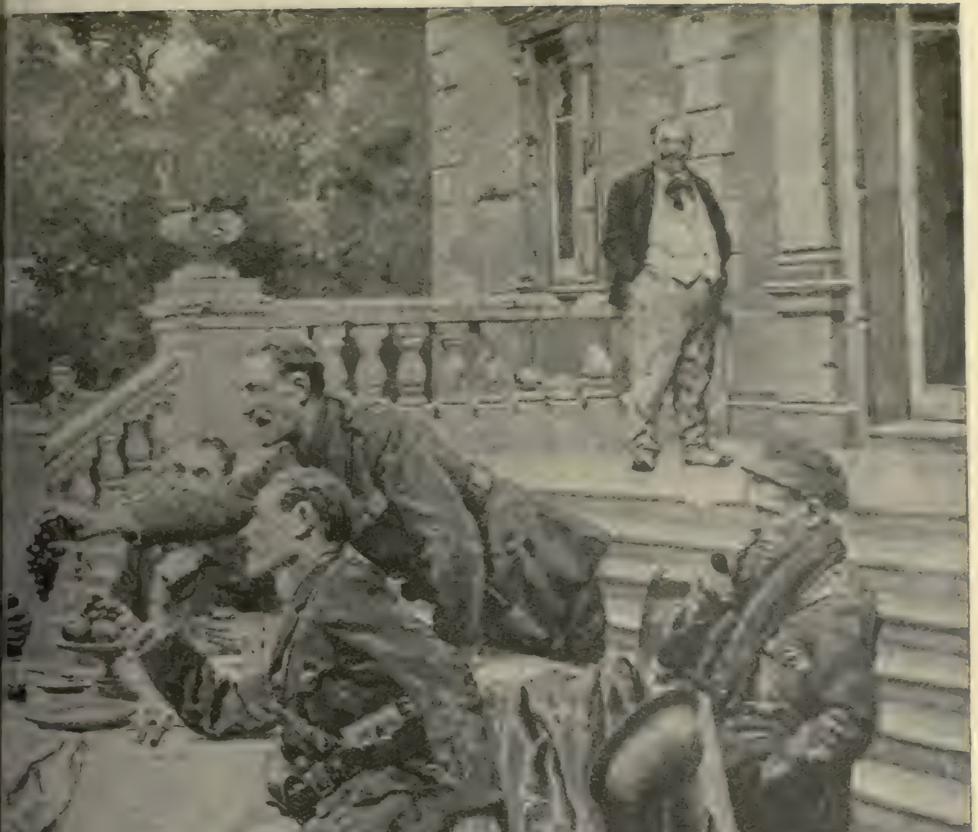
Lance-Corporal Mugford, who was a native of East Ham, pushed ahead of his comrades during an attack, and got his gun into a forward and very much exposed position, from which he was able to pour a stream of bullets upon the enemy, then massing for a counter-attack. His "No. 2" was killed almost immediately, and he himself was severely wounded. He was then ordered to shift to a new position, and told to go to a dressing-station as soon as he had installed his gun. Nevertheless he "carried on," and was able to break up the enemy's formation and put a stop to the threatened counter-attack. Shortly afterwards he was again wounded: a shell broke both of his legs. Even in this terrible condition he remained with his gun and begged his comrades to leave him and take shelter. Later on he was removed to a dressing-station, when he was wounded for the third time. Nowhere can you read of greater courage and doggedness than was shown by Lance-Corporal Mugford of East Ham.



British Soldiers comforting a Fr

(*From the picture by F. Ma*

This picture shows a group of officers taking their evening meal in front of a chateau in a recap
distance shell. A kindly orderly brings her to the notice of the officers, and one of them is seen ha



Child wounded by an Enemy Shell.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

French village during the autumn of 1917. A little girl has been wounded by a splinter from a long-
her a bunch of grapes. The owner of the chateau watches the pleasing scene from the steps of his house.

Lance-Corporal Walter Peeler, Australian Imperial Force.

This fearless soldier, armed with a Lewis gun, went ahead with the first wave of an assault. On the way forward he fell in with an enemy party which had taken cover in a shell-hole, and was sniping our advancing troops. At once he rushed the position, knocked out nine of the enemy, and thus cleared the way for the advance to continue. Later on he performed similar acts of valour, and each time accounted for a number of the enemy. The position of an enemy machine gun which was firing on our troops was pointed out to him. He stalked the gun, killed the gunner, and forced the remainder of the team to take refuge in a dug-out hard by. One of our men bombed this shelter and drove them out. As they emerged the lance-corporal shot them down. He actually accounted for over thirty of the enemy, and the official record says that the success of the attack was due largely to his fine example and absolute fearlessness.

Private Patrick Bugden, Australian Imperial Force.

The capture of two pill-boxes, the rescue of a captured comrade, and the succour of many wounded men won Private Bugden the coveted cross of valour. In the face of devastating machine-gun fire he led small parties against stubbornly defended posts, and having silenced the guns by means of bombs, captured the garrison at the point of the bayonet. On another occasion, when a corporal who had become detached from his company had been captured and was being taken to the rear, Private Bugden, with all the chivalry of a knight of the Middle Ages, sallied forth to release him. He shot one of the men escorting his comrade, bayoneted the remaining two, and brought back the corporal to his own lines safely. On five occasions he rescued wounded men in spite of intense shell and machine-gun fire. Any one of the eight deeds here recorded would have been sufficient to win for him the premier award. He was always foremost in volunteering for any dangerous job, and it was while he was thus engaged that he was killed. No Australian, amongst the many who heroically distinguished themselves during the war, rose to a loftier height of unselfish devotion.

Private Frederick George Dancox, Worcestershire Regiment.

This gallant private was one of about ten men detailed to act as " moppers up " during an advance. The line had gone forward to its first objective, and was engaged in strengthening the position, but was considerably hampered in doing so by an enemy machine gun in a concreted redoubt which stood on the edge of our protective barrage. You can easily understand that the pill-box was so placed that an attempt to work round its flanks meant passing through our zone of fire. Private Dancox with the utmost gallantry pushed through the barrage, and having got to the rear of the redoubt, forced his way in and threatened the garrison with a Mills bomb. Shortly afterwards he reappeared with the machine-gun under his arm, followed by forty of the enemy who had surrendered to him. For the rest of the day he kept the captured gun in action against its former possessors. Private Dancox was a native of the " faithful city " of Worcester, which never had a more faithful and gallant son. After he was awarded his well-won cross he was given fourteen days' leave in which to come home to receive his honour. Unhappily his departure was delayed by a counter-attack, in the course of which he was killed.

Private Arthur Hutt, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

"Know your opportunity," says a wise Greek; and, we may add, seize it instantly, or it will be gone for ever. In these pages I have told you of many private soldiers who knew their opportunity of rendering a great service to their country, and immediately seized it, to their own credit and to the great advantage of their cause. During an attack all the officers and non-commissioned officers of a platoon had fallen, and the men were without a leader. Private Hutt, who was among the number, at once placed himself in command of his fellows, and led them forward. He was held up by a strong post on his right, but immediately ran ahead, shot the officer and three men holding it, and forced between forty and fifty of the enemy to surrender. Later on he realized that he had pushed forward too far, and withdrew his party. He covered the withdrawal by sniping the enemy and killing a number of them; after which he carried a badly wounded man into safety. He then directed his comrades to strengthen the position so as to enable it to resist attack; and while they were so engaged he learned that several wounded men were lying out in the open, and were likely to become prisoners unless rescued without delay. There were no stretcher-bearers available, so he himself went out under heavy fire, utterly careless of his own life, and brought in four of his stricken comrades. Private Hutt thus proved himself a born commander and a most unselfish and devoted hero to boot. He was a native of Coventry, that fine old city which has figured so largely in English history. Its woollen goods, which were famous from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, were dyed with "Coventry true blue." Private Hutt will ever be remembered as the truest "true blue" ever produced by the old city.

Private Albert Halton, King's Own Royal Lancashire Regiment.

As a boy Private Halton attended the Carnforth National School. At the age of thirteen he became an agricultural labourer, and worked on several farms in Cumberland. He enlisted as a Derby recruit in July 1915, and served with his regiment at the front until wounded in October 1916. On returning to France he took part in the capture of Vimy Ridge and the battles of the Somme. We had reached our objective during an attack, when Private Halton saw, about three hundred yards ahead, a machine gun shooting down many of our men. He rushed forward all alone, captured the gun and its crew, and brought the men and the weapon into his own lines. He then returned, and rounded up about a dozen prisoners. In these adventures he showed the greatest contempt for danger, and set a very fine example to his comrades. Like most true heroes, he was very modest as to his achievements, and his parents only heard of them, and of the cross which had been awarded to him, through friends. When asked if the news was true, he said he had "only captured a few Germans and a gun," and added, "Well, it's quite right, and it's the highest honour that can come to me in the army."

Private Reginald Roy Inwood, Australian Imperial Force.

During an advance this gallant Australian went forward through our barrage, and, single-handed, engaged in a sharp tussle, during which he killed several of the enemy, and captured a strong post and several prisoners. During the evening of the same day he volunteered for a special all-night patrol. He crawled out 600 yards in front of his lines, and with the utmost coolness and the soundest judgment took such careful stock of the enemy's movements that he was able to bring back very valuable information. Early on the morning of 21st September he discovered the position of a machine gun that was raking his comrades. All alone he bombed the gun, killed all the members of its crew but one, and brought in the survivor and the weapon. Such a record of daring and devotion has rarely been surpassed.

Lance-Corporal John Brown Hamilton, Highland Light Infantry.

Lance-Corporal Hamilton was a native of Dumbarton, and before the war was employed in the electrical works of a Glasgow firm. He was educated at Dumbarton Burgh School and Dumbarton Academy, and during his school days was a member of the Dumbarton Bridgend United Free Church Boys' Brigade. As probably you know, Boys' Brigades all over the country have given many thousands of gallant soldiers to the army, and they rejoice in a record of distinctions unequalled by any similar body. At the close of the year 1917 it was announced that no fewer than seven Victoria Crosses had been won by former members of Boys' Brigades. Lance-Corporal Hamilton, when a member of his Boys' Brigade, was one of the team which won a trophy for physical drill four times in succession ; he also played football for a local club. Now let us see how his early training served him in such splendid stead on the battlefield.

While the enemy was fiercely attacking a part of our lines there was the greatest difficulty in keeping the troops in front and in support supplied with ammunition. An intense and continuous belt of artillery fire had cut off our men from their dumps and headquarters. It was of vital importance that a full supply of ammunition should be pushed forward without delay. At a time when there was a very great shortage of cartridges in the front lines, and it was feared that our men would be forced to retire owing to the lack of ammunition, Lance-Corporal Hamilton, without waiting for orders, carried bandoliers of cartridges through the enemy's belt of fire to the front and support lines, and then, in full view of the enemy's snipers and machine gunners, passed along them distributing ammunition to the men. By doing this he not only enabled the defence to be continued, but, by his splendid example of fearlessness and devotion to duty, inspired all who saw him with fresh confidence, and with a renewed determination to hold on.

Private Charles Melvin, Royal Highlanders.

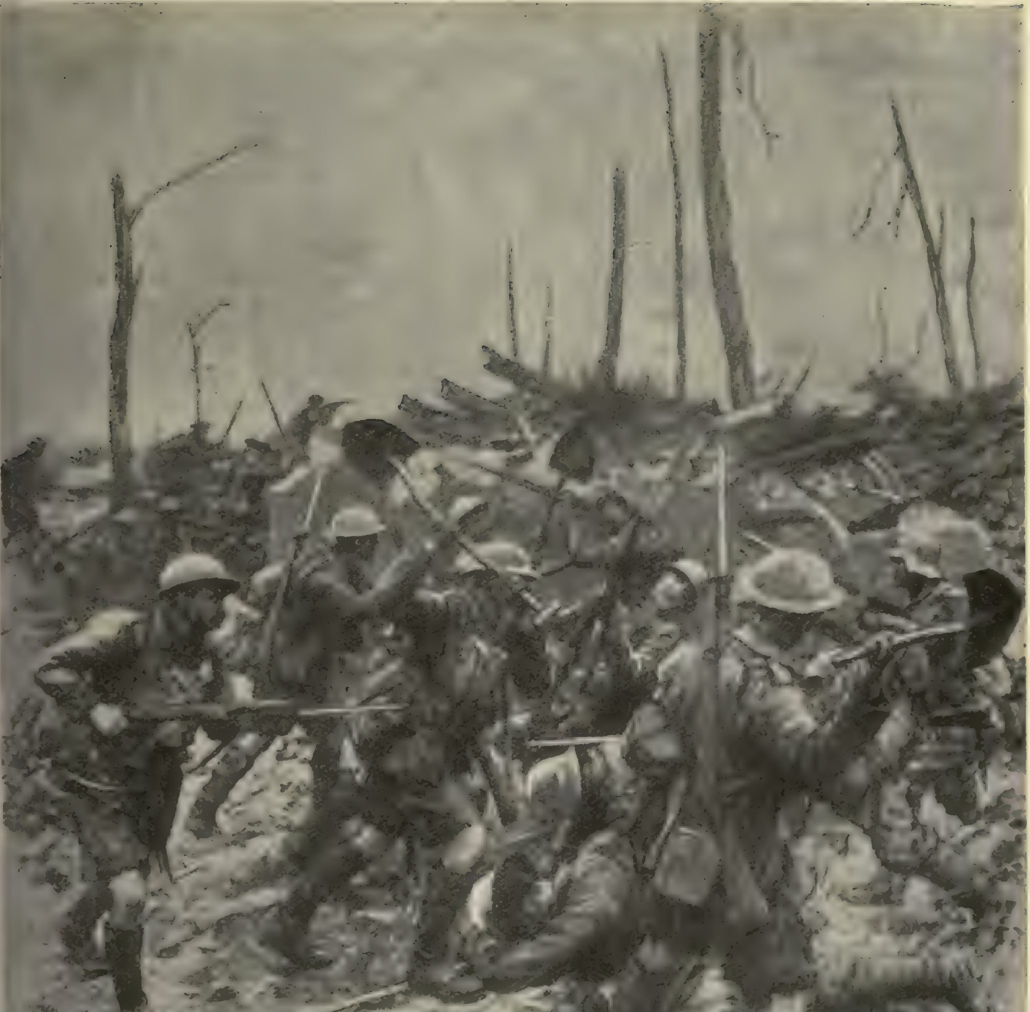
A Kirriemuir hero now appears in our record. No doubt many of you have heard of this Forfarshire town, which the great writer Sir J. M. Barrie has immortalized in his *Window in Thrums*. Private Melvin enlisted in the regular army as far back as 1905, and was on his way home as a time-expired man when war broke out. He was recalled to the colours, and in May 1915 was wounded. Three months later he was back in the firing line again, and once more was hit. After his recovery he was transferred to another front, and there received his third wound. His gallantry had already won him the praise of his commanding officer, who had presented him with a watch. We are now to learn how he won the premier distinction.

His company had advanced to within fifty yards of the front-line trench of an enemy redoubt. The fire from this strong point was so fierce that the men were forced to lie down and wait for reinforcements. Instead of seeking cover, Private Melvin rushed on by himself over ground swept from end to end by rifle and machine-gun fire, and, reaching the enemy's trench, began firing into it. The defenders fired back at him, and when his rifle jammed his position became perilous in the extreme. Drawing his bayonet and using it as a sword, he jumped into the trench, and fought with such skill and resolution that the enemy fled to the second line, leaving a number of dead and wounded behind them as well as eight unwounded men, whom the gallant private promptly disarmed.

Shortly afterwards he was seen driving his eight unwounded prisoners before him, and at the same time supporting a wounded German. He hustled the company back to his own support trenches, and handed his prisoners over to an officer. This done, he provided himself with a load of ammunition, and returned to the firing line. You must remember that all the time he was under fierce rifle and machine-gun fire, and that he and his prisoners had to pass over ground which was literally spouting with the explosions of heavy shells. It is impossible to overestimate the confidence and courage which his gallant and fearless example evoked in his comrades.

Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Drummond Borton, D.S.O., London Regiment.

Colonel Borton had to lead his battalion across unknown country in deep darkness towards the spot where they were to



Spades versus Bayonets.

(*From the picture by A. Forestier. By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

In the Battle of Menin Road, during the Ypres fighting, a party of Scots engaged in "digging in" were suddenly assailed by Germans who rushed from their dug-outs and attacked them with the bayonet. At once the Scots plied their spades with such effect that the Germans were wiped out almost to a man.

deploy for attack. He reached the place safely, and at dawn went forward with his men against a strongly-held position. When the leading waves were checked by a withering hail of machine-gun bullets, he showed the greatest contempt for danger, and went to and fro encouraging them under very heavy fire. Reorganizing his troops, he dashed forward at their head, and carried the position. At a later stage of the fight he called for volunteers to follow him against a battery of field-guns which were firing at point-blank range. He and his men charged the guns, and captured them, as well as the detachments serving them. "His fearless leadership was an inspiring example to the whole brigade."

MAJOR ALEXANDER MALLUS LAFONE, Yeomanry.

Major Lafone held a position for more than seven hours against vastly superior enemy forces. All the time shells were falling upon his trench, and explosions were so frequent that it was difficult to see what the enemy was doing. In one attack dismounted German cavalry charged his flank, but he and his men were able to beat off their assailants and kill many of them. At a second attempt they came within twenty yards of his trench, and one man actually entered the position, but was bayoneted by Major Lafone himself. When all his men but three had been hit, and the trench was so crowded with wounded that it was difficult for the trio who still remained unscathed to move about and fire, he ordered those who could walk to move to a trench slightly in the rear, meanwhile covering their retreat in the most heroic fashion. Finally he was surrounded, and when the enemy charged he stepped out into the open, and continued to fight with all his old courage and resolution till he fell mortally wounded. He had been ordered to hold the position at all costs, and had done so, deeming his own life of no consequence. Few more heroic deeds have been done during the war. Major Lafone's fine leadership, unfailing cheerfulness, and devotion to duty will ever remain as one of the proudest boasts of his regiment.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SUPREME AWARD OF VALOUR.—II.

CAPTAIN CLARENCE SMITH JEFFRIES, Australian Imperial Force.

Another gallant officer who lost his life after displaying the most heroic bravery was Captain Jeffries. During an attack his company was held up by machine-gun fire from several concreted posts. He organized a party, rushed one of the posts, and captured four machine guns and thirty-five prisoners. He then led his company forward through a fierce enemy barrage and under an enfilade of machine-gun fire. Nevertheless he reached his objective, and later on captured another strong post, this time seizing two more machine guns and thirty additional prisoners. During this attack he received his death-wound. He did not fall, however, until he had ensured the success of his comrades. His sacrifice prevented a check which might have had serious consequences.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT SHANKLAND, D.C.M., Canadian Infantry.

Lieutenant Shankland was a native of Ayr, the son of a railway guard in the service of the Glasgow and South-Western Railway. As a schoolboy he too was a member of the local battalion of the Boys' Brigade. Subsequently, after serving as a railway clerk, he emigrated to Canada, where he was assistant cashier in a Winnipeg firm. In 1914 he joined up as a private, and rose through the various grades of the service to commissioned rank. When regimental sergeant-major in 1916 he won the D.C.M.

During an advance he carried a certain position, and then rallying the remnant of his platoon and stragglers from other companies, so disposed them as to command the ground in front and work great havoc on the retreating enemy. Later on he was heavily counter-attacked, but broke up the assaulting party, and enabled supporting troops to come up unmolested. He then made his way to battalion headquarters, where he gave the staff an accurate and valuable report as to the situation. Afterwards he rejoined his command, and carried on until relieved. "His courage and splendid example inspired all ranks, and, coupled with his great gallantry and skill, undoubtedly saved a very critical situation."

LIEUTENANT HENRY STRACHAN, M.C., Canadian Cavalry.

Lieutenant Strachan was a native of Bo'ness, Linlithgowshire, and was educated at the High School and University of Edinburgh. After leaving school he bought a farm in Alberta, Canada. When the war broke out he endeavoured to join a Canadian regiment, but was refused on account of defective eyesight. After several refusals he was permitted to join the Canadian Cavalry as a trooper, and was subsequently granted a commission. In May 1917 he won the Military Cross for destroying the enemy's defences in a particular sector. Let me now describe the feat which won him the Victoria Cross. His squadron of cavalry was approaching the enemy front line at a gallop when the leader was killed. Lieutenant Strachan at once took command, and led his men through the enemy line of machine-gun posts. Then with the survivors of his squadron he charged an enemy battery, and killed seven of the gunners with his own sword. When all the gunners had been killed and the enemy guns silenced, he rallied his men and fought his way back at night through the enemy's line. All his wounded were safely brought in, as well as fifteen prisoners. "The operation—which resulted in the silencing of an enemy battery, the killing of the whole of the gun teams and many infantry, the cutting of three main lines of telephone communication two miles in the rear of the enemy's front line—was only rendered possible by the outstanding gallantry and fearless leading of this officer."

January 24, 1918, will be ever memorable to Edinburgh High School boys. On that day they and their masters united to do honour to Lieutenant, then Captain, Strachan, an "old boy" who by his heroism had added a new and stirring page to the history of their famous school. They presented him with a silver rose-bowl, and gave him round after round of

Off to Blighty: wounded but cheerful.

(*Canadian official picture.*)

A Red Cross train is waiting at a station "somewhere in France," ready to pull out with its load of wounded for England. The wounded man on the stretcher is not the least cheerful of a very cheerful party. His nurse is wishing him "the best of luck and a good crossing."

those full-throated and whole-hearted cheers which only schoolboys can raise.

One of the speakers on the occasion quoted the following passage from Abraham Lincoln's address on the field of Gettysburg *—one of the noblest tributes to the fallen brave that ever fell from the lips of man: "The world will little note or long remember what we *say* here, but it can never forget what they *did* here." I am certain that the boys of the old Edinburgh school will never forget what Captain Strachan did when he rode at the head of his men through the German lines.

SECOND LIEUTENANT CLEMENT ROBERTSON, Royal West Surrey Regiment.

Lieutenant Robertson was an acting captain in the Tank Corps, and was in charge of several Tanks during an attack. They had to proceed under fire from heavy shells, machine guns, and rifles, and there was grave risk that they would miss their way. To avoid this, Lieutenant Robertson led them forward on foot, and guided them carefully and patiently towards their objective. Every moment his life was in danger, and when the Tanks reached their objective and battered down all opposition, an enemy bullet found its billet, and he fell. " His utter disregard of danger and his devotion to duty," says the official record, " afford an example of outstanding valour."

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* Gettysburg is a town of Pennsylvania, United States of America, 35 miles south-west of Harrisburg. Near the town, on the first three days of July 1863, was fought the greatest battle of the American Civil War. The battlefield is now a national park and a military cemetery, covered with monuments and memorials. The Gettysburg speech referred to above was made by Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States, when dedicating the cemetery on November 19, 1863. American boys and girls learn this speech by heart. I give it here, so that you may follow the example of your young allies across the Atlantic.

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We are met to dedicate a portion of it as the final resting-place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

"But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we *say* here, but it can never forget what they *did* here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus far so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Sergeant Harry Coverdale, M.M., Manchester Regiment.

Sergeant Coverdale was a native of Old Trafford, Manchester, and was an engineer's fitter when he enlisted in the local regiment. In 1915 he went to Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, where he remained until our troops were withdrawn. After a short spell of service in Egypt he was drafted to France, where on several occasions he was mentioned for good work. In August 1917 he won the Military Medal for carrying on when all his company officers were wounded. A few months later he received the Victoria Cross in the following circumstances. During an attack he showed the utmost gallantry in approaching his objective, and when close to it went in pursuit of an enemy officer and two men who were sniping our flank. He killed the officer and took the two men prisoners. Then he rushed two machine guns, and in the process either killed or wounded the teams. Subsequently he reorganized his platoon, and led it forward to another objective; but after getting within a hundred yards of it, was held up by our own barrage and forced to return.

Later on this gallant non-commissioned officer again went out with five men to capture the position which had foiled him. He had advanced a considerable distance when he saw a large body of enemy troops approaching. With the utmost skill he withdrew his men, one by one, he himself being the last to retire, and, hastening to headquarters, reported that the enemy was forming for a counter-attack. His gallant leadership and splendid fearlessness did much to ensure the success of the advance in which he was engaged.

Corporal William Clamp, Yorkshire Regiment.

Pill-boxes and snipers in ruined farm buildings had checked the advance of his unit, when he dashed forward with two men and attempted to rush the largest of the concrete blockhouses. The two men with him were knocked out, and he was forced to retire. At once he collected some bombs, and calling upon two other men to accompany him, again made an attempt. He was the first to reach the blockhouse, into which he hurled bombs which killed many of the occupants. When he entered the place he brought out a machine gun and twenty prisoners, all of whom he escorted into our lines, despite heavy fire from neighbouring snipers. He then went forward once more, cheering and encouraging his men ; but after rushing several snipers' posts, was shot by an enemy marksman. "His magnificent courage and self-sacrifice were of the greatest value, and relieved what was undoubtedly a very critical situation."

ACTING-CORPORAL JOHN COLLINS, Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

The battalion to which this gallant Welshman belonged had deployed ready to advance, when heavy fire from artillery and machine guns forced it to lie down in the open. Men fell fast, and repeatedly Corporal Collins went out under heavy fire, and brought the wounded back to cover. In subsequent operations throughout the day he was foremost in rallying and leading his command. He led the final assault with the utmost skill, in spite of heavy fire at close range and of uncut wire that barred the way. No fewer than fifteen of the enemy fell before his bayonet. After the objective had been captured he pushed on beyond it, and with a Lewis gun took up a position from which he was able to keep off the enemy until the post was rendered capable of defence. While so engaged, he was continually under fire from rifles and guns. Throughout this memorable day he set a magnificent example of resource and fearlessness.

PRIVATE THOMAS HENRY SAGE, Somersetshire Light Infantry.

This hero, who hailed from Tiverton, took shelter in a shell-hole with eight other men during an attack on an enemy strong post. One of the men was killed in the act of throwing a bomb, which fell from his lifeless fingers into the midst of his companions. At once Private Sage, with the utmost devotion and presence of mind, threw himself on the bomb, which exploded, and wounded him severely. He deliberately risked life and limb to save his comrades, and thus rose to the very highest pinnacle of self-sacrificing courage.

CHAPTER XXV.

GENERAL MAUDE'S LAST DISPATCH.

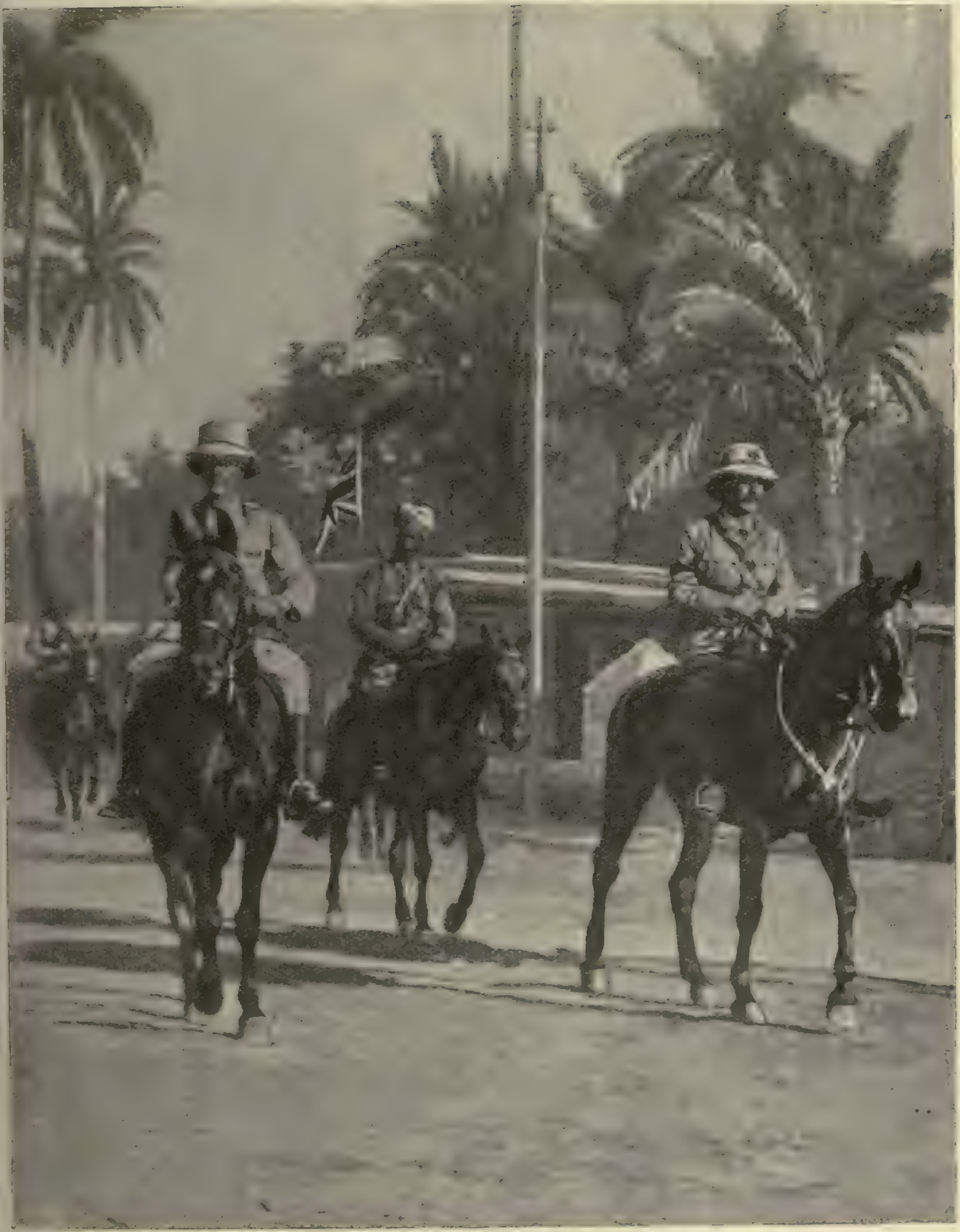
AT the conclusion of the chapter in which I described the capture and occupation of Jerusalem I mentioned the Battle of Ramadie, which brought our Mesopotamian forces to within four hundred miles of Aleppo, the historic trade-centre of North Syria. I must now tell you something of the operations of our forces in Mesopotamia after the capture of Bagdad. If you turn back to Chapter IX. of our seventh volume, you will learn that on the morning of March 11, 1917, we entered the famous city.

Our troops were then under the command of Sir Stanley Maude, a general who had been a soldier from his youth up. He was but twenty years of age when he joined the Coldstream Guards. His first service was in the Sudan, and by 1899, when war broke out in South Africa, he was brigade-major of the Brigade of Guards. He fought in several of the South African battles, and received the D.S.O., and the Queen's Medal with six clasps. Subsequently he became private secretary to the Secretary of State for War, and after 1908 did valuable service in connection with the Territorial Force. When the Great War began he went to France with the 5th Division, on the staff of which he was then serving, and was given command of the 14th Infantry Brigade. After recovering from a severe wound he was promoted major-general, and was appointed to command the 13th Infantry Division, which was transferred from France to Gallipoli, thence to Egypt, and afterwards to Mesopotamia. He was holding this command when it was thought necessary to place the forces on the Tigris under a younger and more active leader. In August 1916 he was chosen to succeed Sir Percy Lake in the chief command, and no better choice could have been made.

The Mesopotamian campaign had so far gone very badly. At the beginning of the year 1915 our troops were entrenched on both sides of the Tigris at Kurna. By the middle of May we were ready to advance up the river, and by 12th September had reached Sanna-i-yat, a position which covered Kut-el-Amara, more than three hundred miles from the Persian Gulf. A victory was won on the 27th, and Kut was occupied. We then pushed on to Ctesiphon, where, after a stubborn fight, in which about one-third of our men fell, the Turks, heavily reinforced, fiercely attacked us, and compelled us to retire to Kut, where we suffered a siege which lasted from Christmas Day 1915 to 27th April 1916, when General Townshend was obliged to surrender.

Meanwhile a relief column under General Aylmer was moving up the Tigris, but, owing to the floods, was making but slow headway. On 13th January 1916 it was only twenty-five miles from Kut. At this juncture Sir John Nixon, the Commander-in-Chief, was invalided home, and Sir Percy Lake was placed in command. Strenuous efforts were made to advance, but for more than a month there was a weary deadlock. Not till 5th April were we able to push forward a little, and later in the month bad weather suspended operations altogether.

This failure to relieve Kut was a bitter disappointment, and the whole nation felt humiliated. It was known that the transport service had broken down, and that the medical arrangements had gone to pieces, with the result that the sufferings of the wounded were terrible. Public opinion at home demanded a Commission of Inquiry, which was set on foot in August 1916. In June 1917 a Report was issued, and a miserable story of cross-purposes, bad judgment, mess, muddle, neglect, and incompetence was revealed. The Indian authorities, who had control of the campaign, did not work hand in hand with the home authorities, and were led astray by their military and naval advisers. The Commissioners said that Sir John Nixon, a gallant but impetuous soldier, had decided to advance from Kut to Bagdad without sufficient troops, transports, food, and stores for the purpose. He had hurried his troops forward against the plainest of warnings, with the result that they were besieged at Kut, and in the end forced to surrender.



General Maude, the Victor of Ramadie, riding through Bagdad.

(*Photo, Dunn.*)

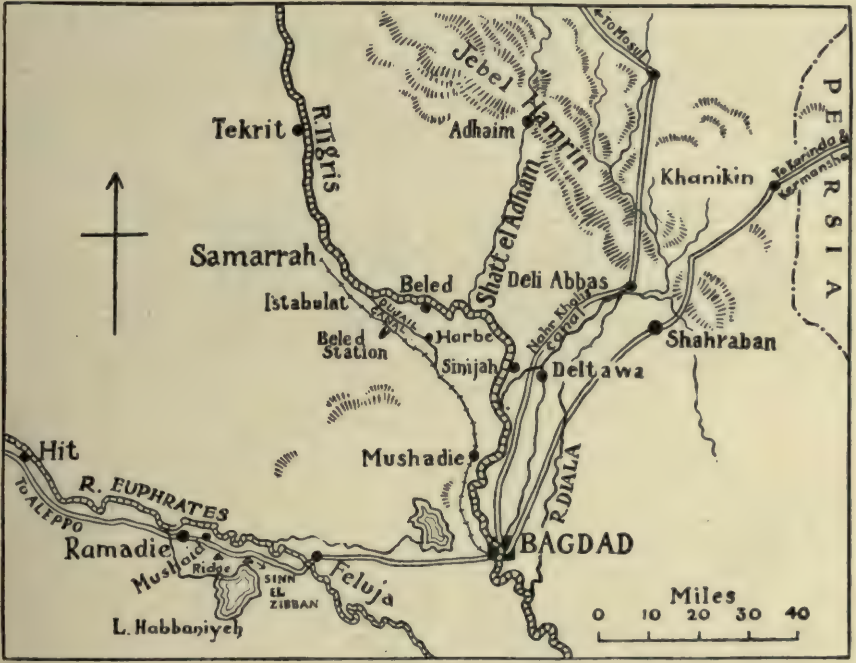
General Maude is seen on the right.

The worst feature of the Report was the light which it threw on the sufferings of the sick and the wounded. No river hospital steamers had been provided, and the ordinary vessels which were pressed into service were filthy and terribly overcrowded. Many of the wounded had to be transported to the river in ordinary transport carts, in which there was frequently no padding. In some cases dead bodies were used as cushions. You can imagine the anguish of the poor fellows as they were jolted along in these carts. It was clear that the medical services had broken down utterly, and that the high authorities had done their best to prevent the truth from leaking out. A young medical officer, Major Carter, insisted on bringing the appalling state of things to the knowledge of his chief, and as a consequence was threatened with arrest as a " meddlesome, interfering faddist." The revelations of the Report filled the nation with loathing and disgust.

Censure was meted out by the Commissioners not only on the medical officers responsible, but on the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge. He, it was said, did not fully utilize his powers to order at an earlier period an inquiry into the condition of the wounded. Even severer censure was passed upon the Commander-in-Chief in India, who would do nothing to improve matters until he was forced to do so by the Viceroy. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, was also blamed, and he, to his credit, promptly resigned. The resignation of Lord Hardinge was called for; but the Government threw its mantle of protection over him, and he escaped scot-free, and even retained his post in the Foreign Office. Certain punishments were awarded to the other blunderers and incompetents, but few persons thought that justice had really been done.

It was while affairs were in this terrible condition that Sir Stanley Maude assumed command. His first business was to put an end to the mess and muddle in the transport and medical services, and to reorganize and strengthen his army. When he had done this, and only then, did he venture upon an advance. In the middle of December he marched out with all his forces, occupied the line of the Shatt-el-Hai river, and in the manner described in Chapter IX. of our seventh volume drove the Turks out of their trench systems, and forced them back into Kut. Following up this success with all speed, he drove the Turks in general retreat before him, and on 11th March entered and occupied Kut.

At this point we will turn to his dispatch, which brings down the story of subsequent operations to 15th October. He tells us that as Bagdad was an open city, devoid of means of defence, he had to follow up the shattered but reinforced columns of the 18th Turkish Corps which he had defeated, and at the same time watch the 13th Corps, which was falling back from Western Persia before the Russians. On 2nd April he joined hands with the Russians, and as soon as they were well established on the line of the Diala, withdrew the column which had served the double purpose of harassing the retreat of the Turks and linking up with our Allies.


To Mosul
Jebel Hamrin
Adhaim
Tekrit
R. Tigris
PERSIA
To Karind & Kermanshah
Khanikin
Shatt el Adhaim
Samarrah
Beled
Deli Abbas
Istabulat
Dujail Canal
Nahr Khalis Canal
Beled Station
Harbe
Shahraban
Sinijah
Deltawa
Hit
Mushadie
R. Diala
R. EUPHRATES
To Aleppo
Ramadie
BAGDAD
Mushaid Ridge
SINN EL ZIBBAN
Feluja
L. Habbaniyeh
Miles
0 10 20 30 40

He was now able to resume operations along both banks of the Tigris. On 6th April our cavalry moved north of the Diala, and came into touch with the Turks, who numbered 4,000 rifles, with 200 sabres and sixteen guns. They were holding

British Infantry marching through Bagdad on the Way to the Front.

(*British official photo.*)

Harbe, a place forty-eight miles above Bagdad, their advanced troops being stationed about Beled station, on the railway from Bagdad to Samarra. On the 8th our troops attacked the enemy's position covering Beled station, and, thanks to a splendid advance by the 51st Sikhs, the rising ground which commanded the station was secured, and the enemy was forced to retreat. Next day Harbe was occupied, and our troops were halted to allow further operations on the left bank of the Tigris to be carried out.

By this time our men on the left bank had driven several parties of the enemy across the Shatt-el-Adhaim. It now became evident that the Turks on this river were preparing for a converging movement against our troops on the left bank of the Tigris. By the 9th they were about seven miles south-west of Deli Abbas, which you will see on the map north of the Diala by Shahraban. To meet this threat troops were sent up the right bank of the Nahr Khalis Canal towards Deli Abbas; other troops held the enemy on the Shatt-el-Adhaim, while another column made a night march, and fell upon the right flank of the enemy. Two Welsh battalions and the Wiltshires were entrusted with this task, and they completely surprised the enemy. Our artillery and rifle fire inflicted heavy casualties upon him before he could recover himself, and he was forced into retreat. Mirage, heat, and lack of water hindered our operations, so that we did not reap full advantage from our victory.

Meanwhile, at midday on the 12th, our cavalry came into touch with the enemy six miles to the south-west of Deli Abbas, and a rearguard action began which also forced the Turks to withdraw. We entered Deli Abbas on the 15th, and there stopped the pursuit. Had we followed the enemy up into the hills to the north all the advantages of position would have been his. Having thus disposed of the 13th Turkish Corps, General Maude now turned his attention to that part of the 18th Turkish Corps which was holding the Shatt-el-Adhaim. Early on 18th April troops were thrown across that river, and by 11.40 in the morning the stream had been bridged. By 2 p.m. our infantry had cleared the loop of the river, and the enemy was again in retreat. British cavalry followed him up, and turned the retreat into a rout. Only a small fraction of the Turks opposed to us that day managed to escape. An

Indian cavalry regiment, the Horse and Field Artillery, and four Lancashire battalions specially distinguished themselves.

The left bank of the Tigris had now been cleared, and a further advance was ordered on the right bank. The Turks were holding a position about Istabulat, some ten miles south of Samarra, the former terminus of the Bagdad railway—their left resting on the river, and their front stretching for two and a half miles across the Dujail Canal to the Bagdad-Samarra railway. They had 6,700 infantry and thirty-one guns, with reserves of 4,000 other infantry and fifteen guns, as well as a small force of cavalry. At 5 a.m. on the morning of 21st April the Black Watch and the 8th Gurkhas attacked the enemy's front on the north side of the Dujail Canal. This position was protected by two redoubts—one near to the river, the other on the railway side of the canal.

Our men advanced under a creeping barrage such as we had so effectively used in the West. They made steady progress in spite of hot fire from rifles and machine guns, and captured the redoubt near the river. Then they assaulted the other redoubt, and carried it, but it was afterwards recaptured by the enemy. Another attack, however, won it back again, and thus we obtained a good foothold in this part of the enemy's defences. At 6.30 a.m. Seaforths and Punjabs made a splendid advance south of the canal. They had to cross 2,000 yards of open ground without cover of any kind. With fine dash and gallantry they swept across the plain, and before half-past seven had won some 700 yards of the enemy's front. At once they laboured to put it in a condition of defence, and though counter-attacked several times, were able to hold all their gains.

During the early morning of the 22nd the enemy withdrew from this powerful position, and we immediately occupied it. At daybreak our troops moved forward in pursuit, and by noon the enemy was discovered holding a series of unfinished trenches near Istabulat. The heat was so great that the attack upon these trenches was postponed until evening. Our guns made havoc of the defences, and the Leicesters, supported by Sikhs and other Indian troops, made a dashing attack which nearly resulted in the capture of the enemy's guns. They were withdrawn in the very nick of time. We carried the trenches, and the Turks having rallied, counter-attacked, but could not win them back. They kept up a heavy fire until evening, and then retreated on Samarra. During this day's fighting a regiment of Indian Lancers made a most gallant attempt to break through the enemy's line. These splendid horsemen captured the front Turkish trench, but were prevented from advancing further by fire from the trenches in the rear. On the 24th we entered Samarra, and there established a post, the enemy meanwhile retreating on Tekrit, some twenty-five miles further up the river and railway.

You will remember that the Turks on the left bank of the Tigris had retreated into the Hamrin Hills. By the time we had established ourselves in Samarra they were ready to take the offensive once more. They moved down the Shatt-el-Adhaim in two columns, the first column, which was about 2,000 strong, with nine guns, being seventeen miles in advance of the second column. A chance was thus afforded of routing the first column before it could be joined by the second. At daybreak on the 24th the leading column was attacked by several Lancashire battalions, with the result that the Turks gave way, crossed the river, and retired rapidly up the left bank towards the remainder of their forces. While doing so they afforded our artillery and machine guns excellent targets. We buried about a hundred of the enemy, and captured 130 prisoners.

Again the Turks retired to the foothills of the Hamrin range, and this time we followed them and occupied a line two miles from them. The bad light, the heat, and engine troubles prevented our airmen from spying out the Turkish position; and during the night of the 28th–29th April a violent dust-storm arose, and continued without ceasing for forty-eight hours. Our plan of attack was to push forward on the 30th up the left bank of the Shatt-el-Adhaim, and throw our weight against the enemy's weaker flank. Then we proposed to turn northwest and drive him away from the water and from his line of retreat.

At 5 a.m., in the midst of the dust-storm, the Cheshires and South Wales Borderers attacked across 1,000 yards of level plain, and struck hard on the enemy's left flank. Happily, at seven o'clock the storm abated, and an hour later the Turks were in full retreat. Our successful attack was marred by a disaster. Two of our companies which had lost nearly all their officers advanced too far in pursuit. For a moment they were successful in capturing two batteries, a number of machine guns, and many prisoners. While, however, they were out of touch with the main force they were counter-attacked and cut off. They made a gallant hand-to-hand fight for some time, but few of them escaped.

This counter-attack and the dust-storm which was now raging again enabled the enemy to retake the village of Adhaim, which we had captured. Our artillery and machine guns, however, played upon the village so fiercely that the Turks could not leave it, and by eleven in the morning it was in our hands once more. Thanks to the dust-storm, the Turks were able to strengthen their left and follow their line of retreat. During this period of hard marching and heavy fighting the Buffs specially distinguished themselves.

At the end of April the position of affairs was as follows. The enemy's 13th and 18th Corps had been separated and driven back—the one into the Hamrin foothills, the other to Tekrit. The 13th Corps had twice attempted to attack us, and had twice suffered heavy defeat, while the 18th Corps had been driven from selected positions four times. During the month we had captured some 3,000 prisoners, seventeen guns, railway engines, trucks and carriages, and booty of all kinds. The spirit of the enemy had been broken by his reverses, but the increasing heat had put an end to our operations on a big scale, and many of our men were sent to India on leave.

CHAPTER XXVI.

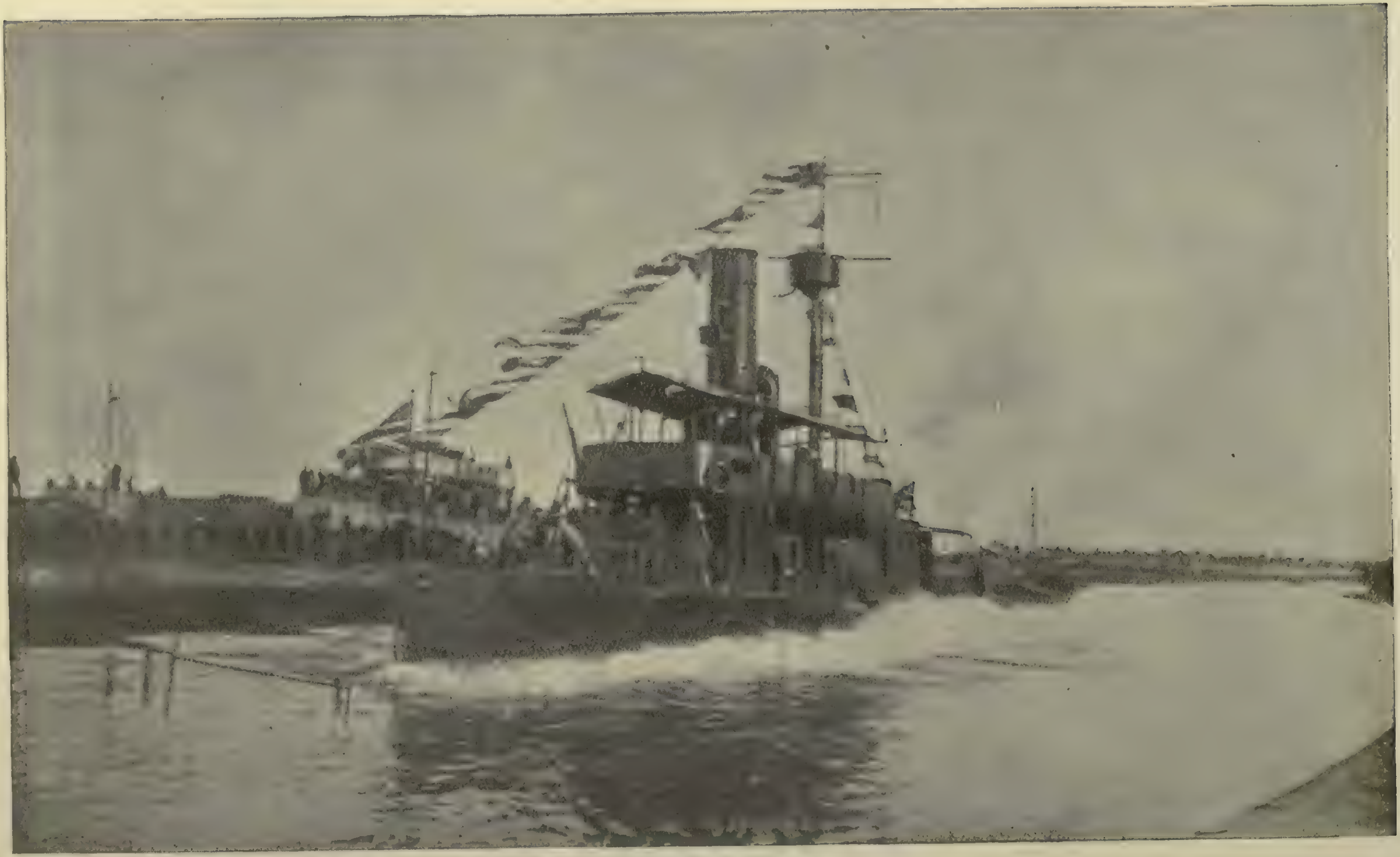
THE BATTLE OF RAMADIE.

NOTHING of importance happened until July, when General Maude considered that the time had come for him to strengthen his hold upon the river Euphrates. So far, all his attention had been given to the Tigris. If you examine the map on page 267, you will see, about thirty miles west of Bagdad, the town of Feluja, on the left or north bank of the Euphrates. Some twelve miles farther to the west you will notice high ground marked Sinn El Zibban. On 8th July this high ground was occupied, and we found ourselves within striking distance of the town of Ramadie. Its capture was the next item in our programme.

On 10th July motor vans and lorries carried our troops to the point of assembly. The heat was intense, and our men could not have marched during the day without great distress. Throughout the operations which I am about to describe they were plentifully supplied with water and ice.

After a night march the column which was to attack Ramadie found itself at four in the morning of 11th July in touch with the Turks east of the threatened town. The Turks made a stubborn resistance, but their advance guards were driven in. While our men were preparing for the final assault a blinding dust-storm sprang up, and the heat grew more and more intense. Nothing could be seen in the whirling sand, and, to make matters worse, our wireless and line telegraphs would not work. To attack in such circumstances was madness. The operation was, therefore, abandoned.

Not until September was it resumed. Meanwhile the enemy had taken up an advanced position on a low line of sand-dunes



British Gunboat on the Tigris.

(By kind permission of Sir Alfred Yarrow.)

known as the Mushaid Ridge,* which runs north and south, and rises some sixty feet above the plain. To the north of the ridge lies the Euphrates River, and to the south the salt lake of Habbaniyeh. Between the river and the lake there is a canal known as the Euphrates Valley Canal. The Turkish main position, which was sited about one mile to the south-east of Ramadie, was semicircular in outline. Its eastern front ran along but behind the Euphrates Valley Canal, and its southern front across bare sandy downs from this canal to the Aziziyeh Canal, which leaves the Euphrates one mile west of Ramadie and runs southwards. General Maude's plan was to turn the southern flank of the Mushaid Ridge, secure a crossing over the Euphrates Valley Canal, and attack Ramadie from the south. While this attack was going on, cavalry were to march westward and throw themselves across the Aleppo road, thus blocking the enemy's line of communications and cutting off his retreat. The enemy was led to believe that the main attack was to be made against his left, and in order to deceive him a bridge of boats was thrown across the river.

An advanced camp was formed on the Euphrates some five miles west of Feluja, and on the 27th the infantry moved two miles to the west, and reached the point from which they were to attack the ridge at dawn. That night two infantry columns, one column on the right and the other on the left, moved off. At dawn they attacked the Mushaid Ridge. The left column skirted the northern edge of Lake Habbaniyeh, and before daybreak on the 28th was behind the southern flank of the ridge. It also seized a dam across the Euphrates Valley Canal, and thus secured a bridge that could be crossed by all arms. The Mushaid Ridge was now turned, and the enemy was forced to withdraw from it. He expected our troops to occupy it, and consequently shelled it heavily. But as soon as the Turks left the ridge we changed our line of attack, as I will explain in a moment. At 7 a.m., screened by the Mushaid Ridge, our cavalry were transferred from our right flank to our left flank. They crossed the Euphrates Valley Canal by the dam, and made a wide sweeping movement westwards across the canal to the west of Ramadie. After an eight hours' ride they reached a position astride of the Aleppo road, and were ready to cut off the enemy's retreat.

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* See map, p. 277.

Meanwhile, to the west of the Euphrates Valley Canal our left infantry column advanced against the southern front of the enemy's position. Dorsets and 5th Gurkhas had a hard tussle with the enemy, but before long had seized some of the trenches, and were busily engaged in strengthening them. While this attack was proceeding, our right infantry column passed to the rear of the left column, and became the left wing of the attacking force. It pushed on, and gained a footing on the Aziziyeh Ridge to the south of Ramadie. Thus by nightfall the enemy was hemmed in on the south-east and south by our infantry, on the west by our cavalry, and on the north by the river Euphrates.

Mr. Edmund Candler, correspondent with the Mesopotamian forces, writes as follows :—

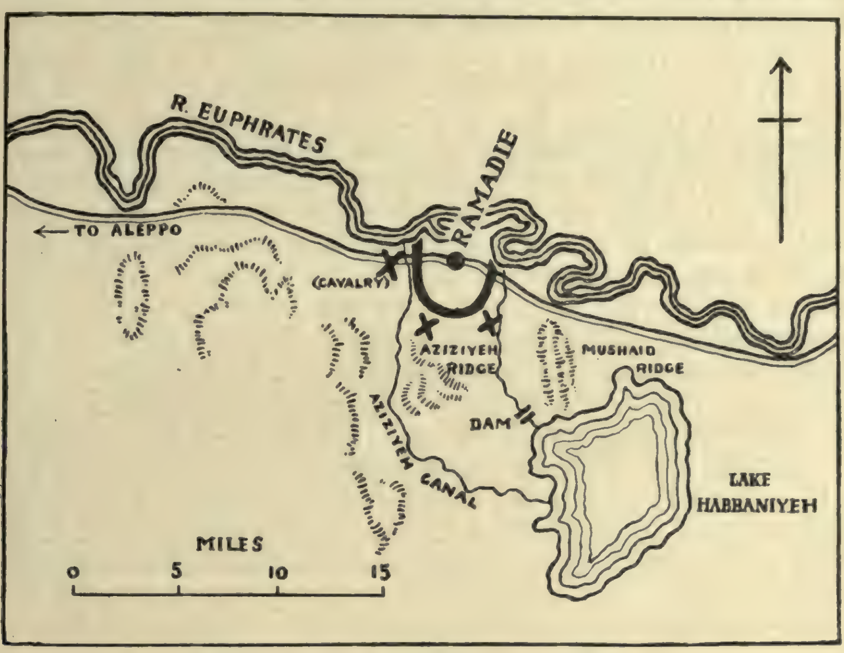
> "The Turks were now cornered. The net which we were flinging round them was complete. They had no bridge behind them, and were cut off from all hope of reinforcement or supplies. Their only chance was to drive in determined counter-attacks, and to break through before we drew the ring in closer and our artillery drove them from their trenches. . . . The capture and holding of the Aziziyeh Ridge by British and Indian infantry was a most gallant affair. This low pebbly rise is perfectly smooth, a long and gentle gradient barely seventeen feet above the level of the plain. It offered no cover of any kind, and our infantry became visible to the Turks a full 200 yards before they reached the top of the rise. As soon as they came into view the enemy opened a fierce rifle and machine-gun fire on our front and right flank, while their guns enfiladed our men from our left. The British and Indian soldiers hung on to their positions, and at night dug themselves in. Their gallantry and determination deserve all praise."

At 3 a.m. the next morning the Turks made a determined effort to break through our cavalry, which were holding the line of retreat on the Aleppo road. After an action which lasted an hour and a half they were headed off by Hussars, Indian mounted troops, and horse artillery, and were forced back into Ramadie. The nearest Turkish dead were found within fifty yards of the cavalry trenches.

Now let us return to the infantry. At a quarter-past six the attack was renewed from the south-east and south. We carried position after position, despite repeated counter-attacks and heavy fire. The 39th Garhwalis seized the bridge where the Aleppo road crosses the canal to the west of Ramadie, and captured three guns and many prisoners. Meanwhile the 90th Punjabis pushed eastward through Ramadie, and secured the Turkish commander (Ahmed Bey) in his headquarters.

> "Our cavalry, far away west, soon saw the dark masses of the enemy approaching, and apparently prepared to give fierce battle. They watched this advance, as they thought, for over an hour; but there came a moment when, to their astonishment, they saw the Turks turn and walk in mass formation towards the British. The Turkish guns were silent, and white flags went up all along the line."

It was a general surrender. Some 3,310 men and 145 officers laid down their arms, and we seized thirteen guns and much other booty. Our surrender at Kut had been gloriously retrieved.



Map to illustrate the Battle of Ramadie.

* * * * * * *

Five weeks after this dispatch was written the melancholy news reached England that Sir Stanley Maude had died of fever, after a very short illness, at Bagdad. His death was a severe loss not only to his many friends, but to the army and to the Empire. During most of his life he had occupied with great credit subordinate positions. His promotion to the chief command in Mesopotamia had revealed him as a general of resource, decision, and enterprise, a skilful leader, and a commander of the first rank. He took command in Mesopotamia at a time when our failure at Kut and the breakdown of the transport and medical arrangements had brought the campaign into disrepute. His wonderful energy overcame all difficulties, and speedily, under his command, the Mesopotamian field became the scene of victory. He never struck until he was fully prepared, and only once did he strike without success. Neatness and completeness marked all his operations, and showed him to be a master of open warfare. Then in the hour of his triumph he was stricken down by a fell disease, cut off, like Nelson at Trafalgar and Wolfe at Quebec, in the moment of victory. Britain could ill spare a general of his gifts, and the whole Empire felt itself the poorer for his loss.

Those who knew him personally tell us that he was a typical soldier of the old regular army. Tall, courteous, firm, thoroughly versed in his profession, he was always popular with those under his command. He always looked on the sunny side of things, and nothing could break down his cheerfulness. Never thinking of himself, but always of his troops and the cause for which he was fighting, he was full of admiration for his men. The record of his generalship on the ancient rivers of history will ever remain his enduring monument.

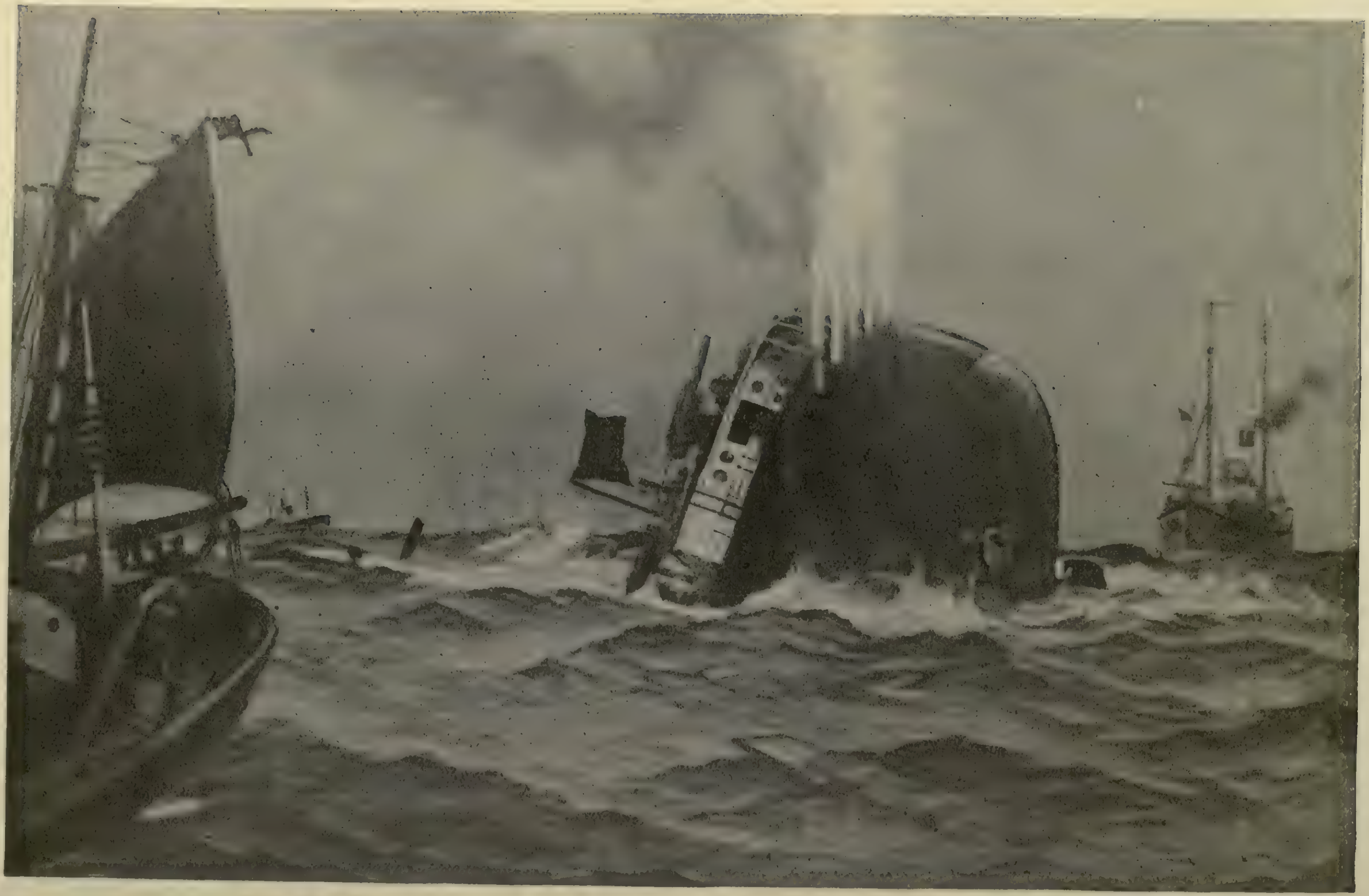
He was but fifty-four years of age when he died. In his will, which was proved in February 1918, he gave the following advice to his three children :—" I hope my children will help, love, and protect their mother, and love and befriend each other."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GERMAN SUBMARINE CAMPAIGN.

WHEN the war began Germany had but thirty or forty submarines. Her naval authorities had not then been persuaded that under-water craft were effective fighting weapons. When, however, their surface fleets were shut up in harbour and Germany thus lost the command of the seas, she began to build submarines of greater size and power, in large numbers, and to employ them in attacks upon our merchant vessels, hoping that by this means she would be able to starve us into submission, and force us to accept her terms, however hard and humiliating they might be. In February 1915 she announced that the waters around Great Britain and Ireland, including the whole of the English Channel, formed a war zone, in which enemy merchant vessels would be liable to destruction without warning either to crews or to passengers. Neutral ships were also to incur danger if found within this barred region.

It was during this campaign that the *Lusitania*, the *Falaba*, the *Arabic*, and many other passenger vessels, as well as relief ships bound for Belgium, were sunk without warning, and without any attempt to ensure the safety of the helpless people on board. In the first five months of this campaign over 1,550 persons were killed by attacks on British merchant ships, and some of the most cruel and distressing scenes in all history were witnessed. The sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915, resulted in the loss of over one thousand lives, and raised in America a storm of anger which nearly led to war. Though apologies and promises of amendment were made to America, it is said that Commander Valentiner, who sank the liner, was decorated by the Kaiser for the foul deed. In April the submarines began to sink fishing boats in large numbers. The



"Spouting like a great whale, the vessel sank from sight with her flag flying to the last."

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

This picture shows a torpedoed merchant vessel going down with the "red duster" flying. As the ship sank she threw up her stern in the air, and went down with a hiss of white foam and a rush of steam through her stern ports, for all the world like a spouting whale in the northern seas. You will notice her stern gun and see rescuing vessels fast approaching.

case of the trawler *Vanilla* illustrates the dastardly methods which were adopted. She was sunk by a torpedo, and when another trawler, the *Fermo*, tried to rescue the crew, she too was fired at and driven off, so that all hands on the *Vanilla* were lost. This killing of fisher folk for no military purpose was part of Germany's policy of "frightfulness."

In their blockade of 1915 the Germans showed every kind of ruthlessness, defied the law of nations, and violated every instinct of mercy. The blockade, however, failed, thanks to the British navy. After a time the U-boats slackened in their efforts, and Mr. Balfour said that the Germans had learned that what were merely crimes in May were blunders in September. They pretended that they were forced to this campaign because Great Britain was using her sea-power in an unlawful way, and they explained that the sinking of neutral vessels was the result of the misuse of neutral flags by British ships.

In April 1916 the German Government promised the President of the United States that passenger ships should not be sunk, and that due warning should be given to all other vessels which the U-boats might seek to destroy, always provided that they made no resistance and did not try to escape. Care was to be taken that the crews of such vessels were afforded at least a fair chance to escape in their open boats. After this promise was given the sinking of ships was not so ruthless as before. Nevertheless instance after instance occurred of terrible distress and cruel loss of life.

Over and over again the President protested, and threatened war; but every time the Germans made false excuses and lying promises, and thus managed to prevent the United States from throwing down the gauntlet. The Kaiser now believed that, no matter what crimes his U-boats committed, America would not fight. He could do as he liked with her. She might bluster and threaten, but she was powerless to do him any mischief. "During this period," says Mr. Gerard, the American Ambassador in Berlin, "I had constant conversations with Herr Jagow and Herr Zimmermann about this submarine warfare. On one occasion Herr Zimmermann said to me that the United States would not dare to do anything against Germany, 'because we have 500,000 German reservists in America, who will rise in arms against your Government if your Government should take any action against us.' As he said this he worked himself up to a passion, and repeatedly struck the table with his fist. I told him that we had 501,000 lamp-posts in America, and that was where the German reservists would find themselves if they tried any uprising." Nevertheless the Kaiser and his ministers knew better. They were soon to be undeceived.

On January 31, 1917, Herr Zimmermann handed a note to Mr. Gerard in which he said that for two and a half years England had misused her naval power in the wicked attempt to force Germany into submission by hunger. She had broken international law in a brutal fashion, and had forced neutrals to abandon or restrict their commerce with Germany. "The English Government persists in the starvation war, which in truth does not hit the fighting forces of its opponent, but forces women, children, the sick, and the old to suffer for the Fatherland's sake grievous privations which are endangering the people's strength." For this reason the German Government announced that thenceforward it would use its submarines to sink every vessel that sought to approach either the ports of Great Britain and Ireland, or the western coasts of Europe, or any of the ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean.

At once "unrestricted U-boat warfare" began. Admiral Tirpitz and his friends had long cried aloud for such action, and they now confidently declared that Great Britain would be on her knees in six months. Before long vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, character, cargo, destination, or errand, were sent to the bottom without warning, and without any thought of help or mercy for those on board; not only the ships of the Allies, but those of neutrals as well. Even hospital ships laden with wounded, and relief vessels carrying supplies to the hungry people of Belgium, were sunk; though the latter were provided with a safe-conduct by the German Government, and were marked in such a way that their character could not be mistaken. The result, as you know, was to force America to declare war against Germany, and to bring to the side of the Allies the vast resources of men and money possessed by the United States. With the advent of America the last hopes of German success disappeared. "Whom the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad."

Already Britain, France, and the United States had armed their merchant vessels. On 19th April the American steamer *Mongolia*, while in British waters, fired the first gun of the war for the United States, and sank a German submarine which was about to attack her. The story of the encounter is told as follows by the *Mongolia's* commander, Captain Rice :—

> "It was 5.22 in the afternoon of 19th April that we sighted the submarine. Lieutenant Ware and I were on the bridge. For five days and nights I had not had my clothes off, and we kept a big force of lookouts at work all the time. We had just taken a sounding, for we were getting near shallow water, when the first mate cried, 'There is a submarine off the port bow!'
>
> "The submarine was close to us—too close, in fact, for her purpose—and she was going under again in order to get into a better position to torpedo us. We saw her periscope go down. I quickly ordered the man at the wheel to starboard the helm, and we swung the nose of the ship towards the spot where the submarine had been seen. We were going full speed ahead, and two minutes after we first sighted the U-boat she emerged again about a thousand yards off, her intention being to catch us broadside on. When she appeared we had our stern gun trained full on her.
>
> "Lieutenant Ware gave the command, and the big gun boomed. We saw the periscope shattered, and both shell and submarine disappeared." [Sailors tell us that a shell always ricochets in the water, and is seen again unless it finds its mark. Oil was also observed on the water after the submarine disappeared. There was no doubt that the U-boat had been sunk.] "I assure you that we did not stop to reconnoitre after the incident, but steamed away at full speed, for it was not improbable that another submarine might be about. The one we got had undoubtedly been lying on the bottom at the spot waiting for our ship, and came up when she heard our propellers. That's about all the story, except this: the gunners had named the guns on board the *Mongolia*, and the one which hit the submarine was called 'Theodore Roosevelt.' * So Teddy fired the first gun in the war after all."

In February Sir Edward Carson, then First Lord of the Admiralty, announced in the House of Commons that an anti-submarine department had been formed, and that it would work along with the Board of Invention and Research, presided over by Lord Fisher. He said that by far the best method of meeting the attacks of the submarines was to arm merchant ships. Three-fourths of the vessels supplied with guns had escaped, as compared with one-quarter of those not so armed. During the months of December, January, and February (up to the 21st of the month) 343 ships, with a total tonnage of over 726,000 tons, had been sunk; but large as these figures were, they were dwarfed by the fact that during the first eighteen days of February 6,078 ships had entered and 6,873 had cleared from ports in the United Kingdom. The Admiralty proposed for the future to issue regular statements of British shipping losses, so that our people might know exactly how we stood. Our greatest asset in the fight against the submarines was the splendid courage of our seamen. Not one British sailor had refused to go to sea because he was afraid of the U-boats.

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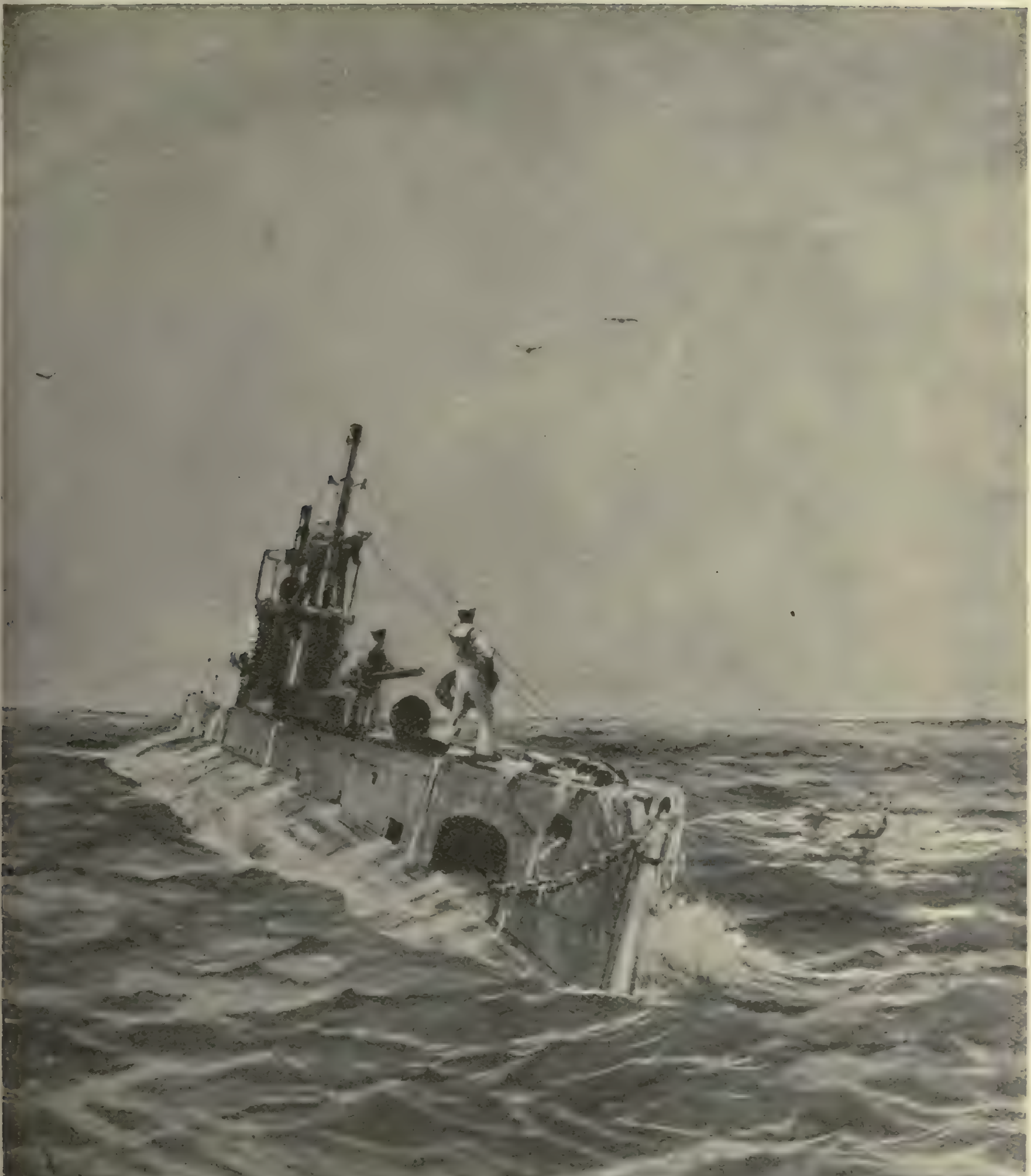
* Born 1858; became President of the United States in 1901, after the murder of President M'Kinley, and was elected full President in 1904. He is a man of great vigour, who has worked as a cowboy in the "Wild West," fought with Roosevelt's rough riders in Cuba, shot big game in the Rockies and in Africa, and has written many books recording his experiences. Almost from the outset of hostilities he urged that the United States should declare war on Germany. In the United States he is known as "Teddy."

In reply to a member who asked why the Admiralty did not publish the number of submarines sunk, he said that the policy of silence was best. All that the enemy knew was that their submarines did not return. What happened to them was a mystery. If the Germans knew that a submarine had been destroyed, they would at once send another to fill the gap.

He also pointed out that it was impossible to be certain in many cases whether a submarine had been destroyed or not. To illustrate this point he gave several instances. A destroyer struck a submarine, and it disappeared. Most probably it had sunk never to rise again, but no one could say for certain. Yet had it been merely injured it would have come again to the surface, and its officers and crew would have been captured. In another case a transport rammed a submarine, which also disappeared. Later on there was found to be an obstruction at the spot. It was almost certain that the obstruction was the wreck of the submarine, but this could not be proved.

He concluded his speech by urging the British people to be economical in food and in those things which had to be imported, and in this way to lessen the strain on the Navy and on the merchant service. He also pointed out the great importance of speeding up shipbuilding so as to replace the vessels which had been lost, and he reminded the workers in our shipyards that every rivet which they drove was a blow against the murderous weapons of the enemy. He believed that the submarine menace could be and would be defeated.

Despite this hopeful speech, the number of ships sunk in

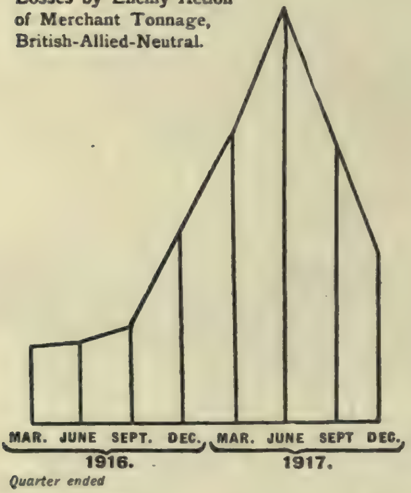


A British Submarine picking up survivors of an enemy U-boat which she has sunk.

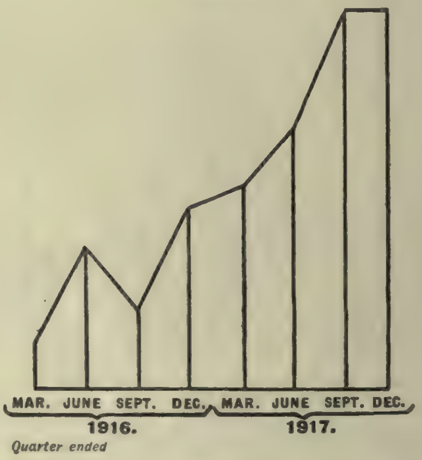
(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

the following month reached its high-water mark for the year. Between 25th March and the end of April 133 ships of 1,600 tons and over were sent to the bottom by mine or torpedo. Again, in June the Germans secured a very heavy bag: 101 large ships fell victims to their submarine attacks. In August 88 vessels were destroyed; but in November the lowest monthly record so far was reached, when 41 ships were sunk. In all, between the week ended 25th February and 15th December, 721 big ships were destroyed, as well as 265 smaller vessels and 166 fishing vessels.

Here are two diagrams which were published by the Admiralty in December. The first of them shows the losses of merchant tonnage, British, Allied, and neutral, from March 1916 to December 1917. You will notice that between December 1916 and the end of June 1917 the line ascends very steeply to its "peak," and afterwards falls even more sharply, until, in the last quarter of the year, it reaches the same figure as in the last quarter of 1916, which, you will remember, was before the unrestricted submarine attack began. The second diagram shows the German submarines sunk. You notice that after the quarter ending September 1916 there was a steady rise in the number of submarines destroyed.

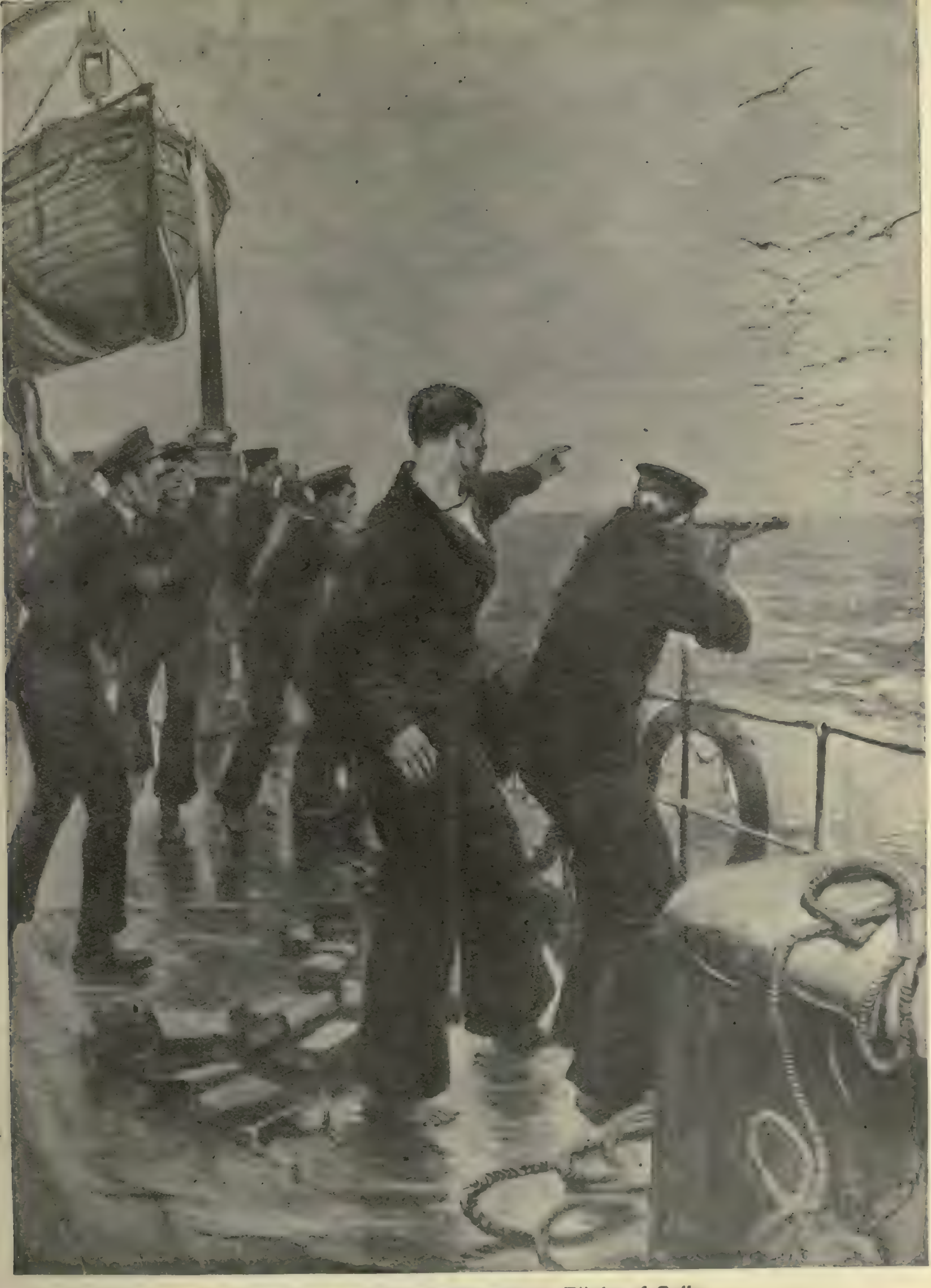


Losses by Enemy Action of Merchant Tonnage, British-Allied-Neutral.



German Submarines Sunk.

Sir Eric Geddes, who succeeded Sir Edward Carson as First Lord of the Admiralty, made a statement in the House of

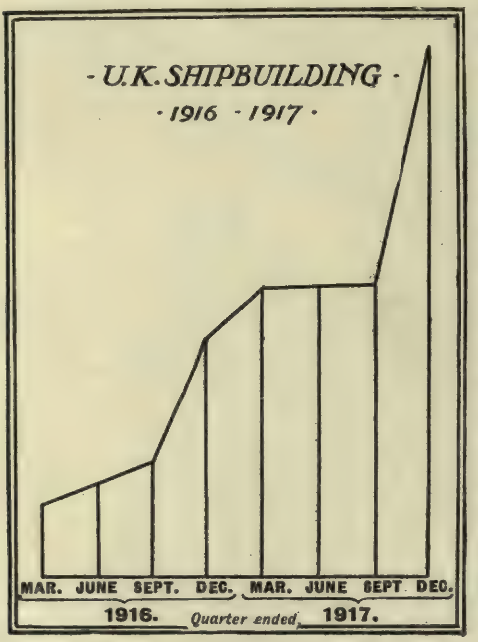


Bluejackets watching a Suspicious Flight of Gulls.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

Strange to say, sea-gulls show the greatest interest and concern in submarines. They will follow a submarine for mile after mile, shrieking and wheeling as it submerges and rises again to the surface. The men of our patrols have noticed this fact, and whenever they see an unusual flight of sea-gulls, watch the water beneath the birds closely, and in this way often "spot" the periscope of the submarine when it is lifted above the waves in order to take a peep at its possible prey.

Commons on 1st November, in the course of which he gave some reassuring information. He said that since the beginning of the war between 40 and 50 per cent. of the German submarines sent into the North Sea, Atlantic, and Arctic Oceans had been sunk, and that during the previous quarter the enemy had lost as many submarines as in the whole of the year 1916.



He also assured the House that the reduction in our tonnage was 30 per cent. less than had been expected. In the case of ships over 1,600 tons, the reduction of British tonnage from all causes since the beginning of the war was under 2,500,000 tons—that is, about 14 per cent. of our total tonnage. He also told us the enemy had loudly boasted that during August they had sunk 808,000 tons; but really they had only sunk half that amount, and only a little more than a third of it was British. In September they had to confess to a falling off; but this they explained by saying that the Allies were losing ships so rapidly that there were not enough at sea to enable their submarine commanders to maintain their bag. The game, they said, was getting very scarce; but as a matter of fact the overseas sailings of all ships, big and small, were greater in number by 20 per cent., and greater in tonnage by 30 per cent., during September than in April.

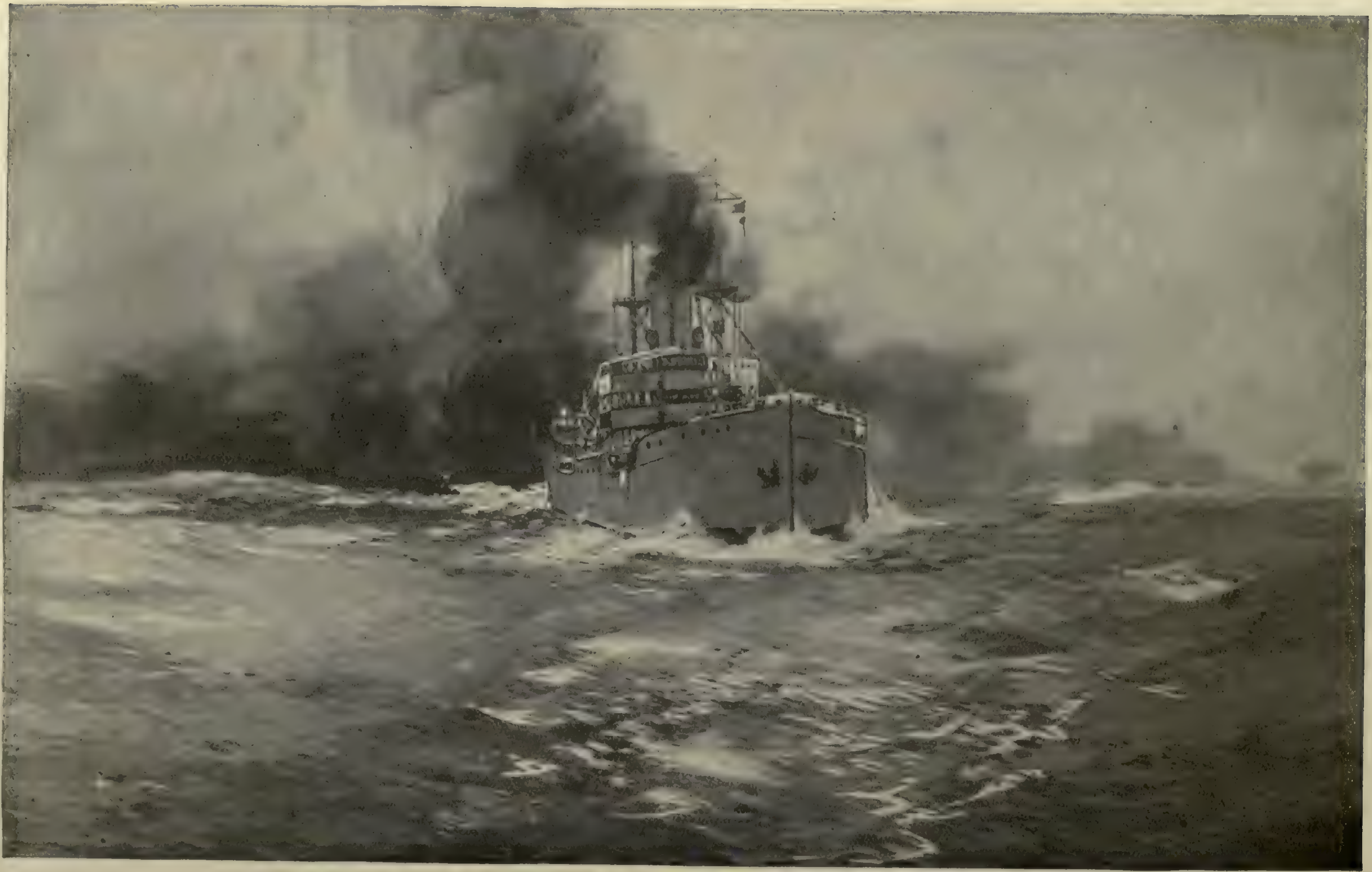
"So he has to find another and a better explanation for his lack of success. I can supply that. The reason is that the long arm of the British Navy has reached down into the depths, and the harvest reaped by the submarines is poorer, and the number of German submarines that do not return is increasing."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HUNTING THE SEA-JACKAL.

DURING his speech Sir Eric Geddes said that almost the best protection against submarines is a gift that God has given to our merchant seamen. It is their eyesight. If a submarine is sighted by the lookout of a vessel, that vessel, whether armed or not, has seven chances to three of getting away safely. Out of every ten attacks when the submarine is sighted by the ship, seven of them fail; but of every ten attacks when the submarine is *not* sighted, eight ships go down. It is seven to three on the ship if the submarine is sighted, and four to one against it if it is not. A public-spirited citizen, Sir Alfred Yarrow, to whose kindness we are indebted for the illustration on page 274, had in the previous April offered rewards to the men on board British ships who first saw and reported a submarine. The result was that merchant seamen were encouraged to keep a sharp lookout, and that out of 172 cases in which the award was made, the number of vessels which though attacked escaped without serious damage was 65, while the number which were not attacked at all was 86. A bright lookout is, therefore, worth far more than half the battle.

Some of the many devices adopted for baffling submarines were kept a profound secret, but others were revealed. The use of the smoke-box, for example, was very common. Such a box contains an apparatus for producing dense volumes of smoke. The fuel is lighted, and the box is usually thrown overboard. At once black clouds arise, and behind them the vessel attacked has a chance of escaping. A form of smoke-box was used in the Battle of Jutland. Another method of eluding discovery was to paint ships in various colours, so that they appeared to



Shrouding a vessel in smoke while being chased by a U-boat: the smoke-box at work.

blend with the sea and sky, and were not so clearly outlined as they would otherwise have been. On the hulls of many ships waves were painted, so as to deceive the submarines as to their speed. As you will learn in the next chapter, groups of ships were formed into convoys, and were protected during voyages by destroyers.

We were allowed to learn that a bomb had been invented the fuse of which could be so timed that the charge would not explode until it was a certain distance below water. Such bombs were supplied to our airships and fleets of mosquito boats employed in submarine hunting. As soon as these very fast little vessels saw a submarine submerge they hastened to the spot and dropped their depth-charges, frequently with good effect. An underwater hearing apparatus was also invented which enabled our men to detect the presence of a submerged submarine at a considerable distance.

Though at the close of the year 1917 the U-boat menace was still grave and our losses were still heavy, many Germans had recognized that their attempt to destroy Britain's mercantile marine had failed. In the middle of January 1918 a Berlin Socialist newspaper said that the U-boat campaign had disappointed every German hope, and that it was powerless to ensure a victory. " The period in which England was to have been forced to make peace by submarine war was fixed at six months. It would be senseless to conceal the fact that, in regard to this important question, we acted on wrong suppositions. So far from England being forced into peace, she is actually girding herself for greater efforts to defeat us."

* * * * * * *

In all ages, when a maritime nation has been unable to keep command of the seas by means of its battle fleets, it has resorted to commerce-destroying. Privateers have been fitted out especially to prey on merchant ships. Many peaceful vessels have been sunk in this kind of fighting, and much hardship has been caused, but in no case has mere commerce-destroying won the war. It is true that during the Great War the Germans employed the submarine, a weapon which had never before been available, and that against slow unarmed or armed merchantmen, or even against old and ill-handled war vessels, it proved very effective. We must, however, remember that every bane has its antidote, and that no device has ever been invented which cannot be countered by some other device.

Let us see what history has to teach us about the effect of commerce-destroying on an enemy still holding the command of the seas. You will remember that the war with Spain in the days of Queen Elizabeth was mainly fought out by sea. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada Sir Francis Drake, the first of our great admirals, constantly urged that the only way to bring the war to a victorious end was to destroy King Philip's battle-fleets. Hawkins, on the other hand, believed that the capture of the Spanish treasure ships would be the best means of forcing Philip to his knees. Elizabeth listened to Hawkins, and year after year our squadrons preyed on the Spanish galleons. We certainly did great harm to Spain by capturing some of her treasure ships and preventing others from sailing. We nearly made King Philip bankrupt; nevertheless, in spite of his losses, he steadily built up his navy, and was able to convey his soldiers to France and Ireland, and more than once to threaten England with a new invasion. Despite all the suffering inflicted on her, Spain practically held her own, and in the end made peace on fairly good terms. So you see that mere commerce-destroying did not ensure the defeat of Spain.

The same result was seen in our wars with Louis XIV., when the French navy made a determined attempt to wrest the command of the seas from England and Holland. In 1692 the French fleet was utterly destroyed at La Hogue, and thenceforward the French resorted to commerce-destroying. They sent out fast, well-armed squadrons under such skilful corsairs as Jean Bart, Forbin, and others; and these vessels were just as destructive to the slow British and Dutch merchantmen as the German U-boats were to the tramp steamers of the Allies. For a time it looked as though the new policy would prevail. Macaulay tells us that many Englishmen thought it would have been better if the French admiral's flagship had not been destroyed, for when she ran ashore in flames her crew, which numbered a thousand, was distributed amongst the commerce-destroying squadrons. Nevertheless the sinking of British merchant ships failed to achieve its purpose; the nation which retained the command of the seas won in the end.

History thus gave us comfort in our struggle with the

U-boats. We believed that though great and grievous losses might result, and we might, perhaps, be obliged to go short of food, we could not be defeated while the enemy's battle-fleets dared not challenge the might of our Navy. We hoped and believed that methods would be discovered which would be as fatal to the submarine as those which we had employed against the Zeppelin.

* * * * * * *

"During the first years of the war," says a writer, "the submarine was a cocky little seabird of prey. Now it is a slinking sea-jackal. Once the submarine commander was a hunter; now he is hunted. Every boat of the Allies is armed against the submarine; hundreds of destroyers are out looking for it; scores of fast cruisers with big guns are lying in wait for it; nearly every fishing boat has its machine gun; and thousands of petrol launches are whizzing through the waters of the danger zone, with no other object than to pot a submarine. Nor is this all. Hundreds of aircraft hover over the waters convoying merchant ships through the zone, and merchant ships themselves, heavily armed, leave the harbour in fleets surrounded by cruisers and destroyers. Knowing this, every submarine commander is well aware that when he comes up to get range of his prey the chances are that twenty guns are aiming at him. So, naturally, he is becoming cautious. He doesn't go sailing through the waters of the world banging away at big unarmed merchant ships as he banged at the *Lusitania*. His hope now is for a sailing vessel or a slow tramp steamer, and even so he takes a chance."

* * * * * * *

The above passage tells you that the U-boat is now no longer a hunter, but is hunted. Let me try to give you some idea of a submarine hunt. Early in the morning an airship soars up from its aerodrome, and makes straight for the sea. As it passes over the cliffs a flock of seagulls whirls up from the rocks like autumn leaves in the wind, and then settles down again. The pilot and his companions are soon far from land; the sea is beneath them and the blue sky overhead. It is a fine morning, and they hope that with luck they may bag a U-boat before the day is over.

Half an hour passes. Suddenly the wireless operator in the rear taps the pilot on the shoulder, and hands him a slate on which he has scribbled a message just received. "S.O.S.," it begins; then follows a bearing from a distant headland—"Fourteen miles. Come quickly. I am being shelled. S.O.S. Submarine." The pilot studies a small square chart clamped in front of him, looks at his compass, and slowly turns his wheel. Fifteen minutes later he points to the rim of the horizon. A faint smudge of smoke is seen, and before long a vessel is sighted full steam ahead, swerving from side to side as she cleaves the water. The crew of the airship strain their eyes, and away to the west they catch a glimpse of a tiny cigar-shaped object. Every now and then a spurt of flame shoots from it, and a pale cloud appears above the quarry as the shrapnel bursts.

The airship, her bombs ready for release, swoops at eighty miles an hour towards the U-boat, and sees its crew tumbling pell-mell down the conning-tower hatchway, leaving the gun still trained on the fleeing merchantman. Now the airship is right overhead; she drops a bomb, and a loud report is heard. The force of the explosion flings up the nose of the airship and rocks her violently, as though she were engulfed in a stormy sea. The bomb has burst above the bows of the U-boat, which has dived for safety. Quickly turning, the airship drops another bomb ahead of the U-boat's wake, and then flings a calcium flare on the water to mark the spot where she was last seen. Meanwhile the tramp has disappeared below the horizon, and the wireless operator is calling up motor launches and destroyers to join in the hunt.

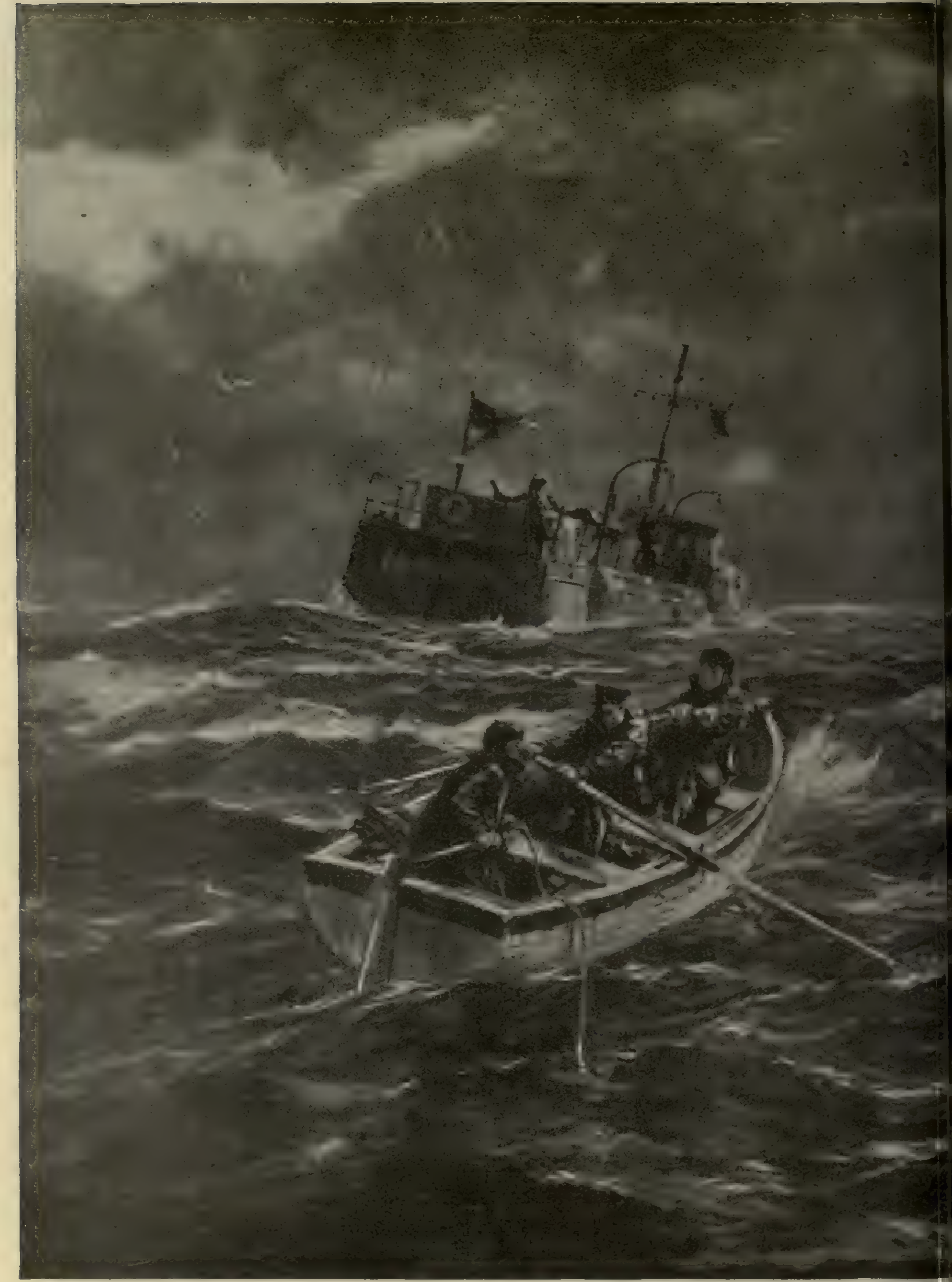
Three motor launches, each carrying a slim gun in the bows, and armed with bombs, speedily appear. The airship signals to them with her Morse lamp, "Submarine's wake three points on your port bow." A motor launch puts her helm over, and darts off in a white cloud of spray, followed by her consorts. Soon she sees, half a mile ahead, the periscope of the U-boat. Bang goes her gun, and a column of foam springs up where the shell strikes the water and goes skimming away in the distance. The U-boat instantly dips her periscope, and a minute later the motor launch is over the spot where it disappeared. A bomb is released, and then another. The periscope appears again, and once more disappears. Meanwhile the guns of the motor launches are barking angrily.

The commander of the submarine has sighted his assailants, and now he attempts to torpedo them. Twice he discharges a torpedo, but twice the trail passes wide. He doubles to and fro ; but do what he will, he cannot shake off his pursuers. His only hope of escape is to remain submerged and get away to the southward ; to the northward are the steel nets which mean death and destruction for him. Some of the bombs have buckled the plates and started the rivets of the U-boat's hull ; the water spurts in, and, mingling with the acid in the batteries, gives rise to poison gas, which drives the boat to the surface. Then the commander is at bay. He mans both his guns and opens fire ; but as he does so a shell bursts a few yards abeam. It has not come from the motor launches. The dreaded destroyers have arrived to join in the hunt.

Away on the horizon the commander of the U-boat sees the funnels of a destroyer flotilla fast approaching. He knows that the end has come. Opening the sea-cock to send his boat all the more speedily to the bottom, he gives a quick glance overhead at the airship now swooping towards him for a finishing touch. There is nothing more to be done. He orders his guns to cease fire, and as the destroyers come dashing through the sea with a " white bone " in their teeth, waves his hands in token of surrender.

* * * * * * *

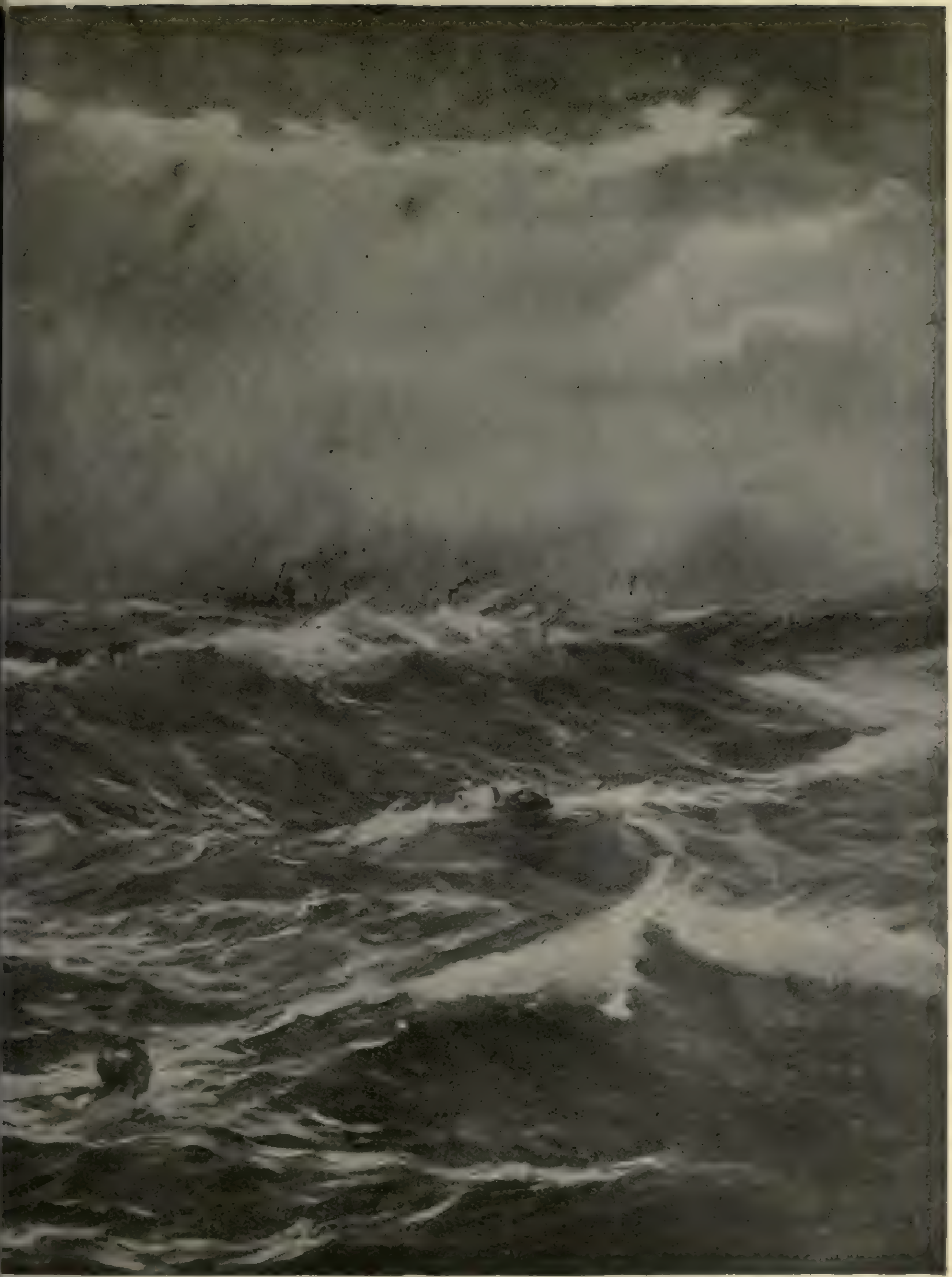
No one who writes about the war must neglect to record the splendid heroism of our merchant seamen. " They have," says Sir John Jellicoe, " founded a new and glorious tradition in the teeth of new and undreamed-of peril, and have borne the full brunt of the enemy's submarine warfare." Despite the awful risks which they ran, there is no instance on record of a merchant seaman refusing to sail because he feared for his life. A writer tells us that a tarry old salt said to him, " If there were fifty times the number of submarines it wouldn't make no difference to us. While there's a ship afloat there will be plenty of men to man her. My mates and I were torpedoed a fortnight ago, and as soon as we can get another ship we shall be off." I propose to give you a few instances of the sufferings and the splendid courage of our merchant seamen in their encounters with the U-boats. When you have read the following stories you will need no words from me to extol their heroism.



A Mine-Sweeper's Bravery: destroying a

(*By permissi*

This incident, which reveals the courage and resource of the men on our mine-sweeping vessels, is th
of mine-sweeping trawlers when a drifting mine was sighted in a heavy sea while half a gale was blowing
night he would lose sight of the mine, the lieutenant lowered a boat and pulled towards it. When
the ring-bolt on the top. The motor launch then towed the mine into smooth water, where it was



Enemy Mine in the track of Shipping.

of The Sphere.)

described : “A lieutenant of the R.N.V.R. was in command of a motor launch attending on a flotilla
Attempts to blow up the mine by gunfire failed, and darkness was coming on. Afraid that during the
was as close as he dared he jumped overboard and swam to the mine with a line, which he passed through
stroyed by gunfire.”

"These are the men who sailed with Drake,
Masters and mates and crew,
These are the men ; the ways they take
Are the old ways through and through ;
These are the men he knew."

On February 6, 1917, the little steamship *Hanna Larsen* left the Port of London just after midnight. She dropped down the river with the tide, passed Gravesend, rounded the wide bend of Thameshaven, and, reaching the Nore at sunrise, steered north. No incident marked the voyage until the night of the 7th. At a little after eleven o'clock, when the weather was hazy and the sea smooth, the second officer, who was on the bridge, was startled by the sound of a gun-shot. The master at once ran to the bridge, and as he did so three shells fell around his ship. Where they came from he could not discover, but it was easy to guess that he was being attacked by a submarine.

At once he made all preparations. He assembled the crew, swung out the boats ready for lowering, and hove to for a quarter of an hour. Nothing happened, so he decided to proceed. Just as the engines had worked up to full speed another shot was fired. It came from the starboard, and passed just over the bridge. The master immediately reversed his engines and sounded three blasts on the whistle, which meant "abandon ship." Three more shells were now fired, and a steam-pipe was broken. After burning his papers at the galley fire the master followed his men into the boats.

The unseen enemy continued to fire while the men were embarking, and four of the crew were wounded. While the two boats were pulling away the submarine was seen—a faint gray shape upon the dark waters. She was stealing round the bow of the ship. The submarine commander hailed the boats and ordered them alongside. The master, the chief officer, two able seamen, and a steward went on board, and the second boat made fast to her stern. Several Germans now jumped into this boat, carrying bombs with them. They rowed to the *Hanna Larsen*, searched the ship, seized all the food and clothing which she contained, and then, having fired the fuses of their bombs, rowed back to the submarine. Shortly afterwards the roar of explosions was heard. Not, however, until the following day did the vessel sink.

Next morning the master and the chief engineer of the *Hanna Larsen* were summoned to the cabin of the submarine commander, who tried to ascertain from them the whereabouts of the British minefield. No oyster was ever closer than the two prisoners. They told him nothing. He, however, told them that he had already sunk eighteen ships, and meant to bring the number up to thirty before he returned to port. The prisoners were then confined below, and the submarine proceeded on her course. Though they could not see what was happening on deck, they could make a good guess. From time to time they heard the guns going above them, and saw shells being passed up to the gunners.

Two hours later, after a couple of rounds had been fired, the prisoners were surprised to see the officers and crew of the submarine come tumbling down below. They appeared to be terrified, and made preparations for submerging the vessel. It was a false alarm, however, and again the boat rose to the surface. In the afternoon firing began again. It ceased suddenly, and the submarine hurriedly dived. Then there was a pause, followed by a tremendous explosion which shook the boat like a terrier shaking a rat. The top plating was burst open, and water poured in.

The commanding officer now gave short, sharp orders to the men working the valves, and the submarine rose swiftly to the surface. Then he and his crew, leaving the prisoners below, clambered upon deck. The two men, shut up in what appeared to be a living tomb, heard shot after shot ring out, and saw pieces of the conning-tower come crashing down the hatchway. They now decided to die, if die they must, in the open, so up they went.

Imagine their surprise when they saw a British man-of-war alongside. One of the submarine officers was flourishing his handkerchief, and the crew were drawn up in line on the sloping deck, every man holding up his hands.

A few moments later a British boat arrived; whereupon the master and chief engineer of the *Hanna Larsen* hailed them. "We are two Britishers, taken prisoner last night." "Jump in," said the officer in command of the boat; and they needed no second invitation. They were saved.

Nothing more was seen of the submarine commander. Probably he had been killed by the shell which smashed the conning-tower. He had gone to his doom with his boast unfulfilled.

* * * * * * *

The following story is told in the words of a report made by the master of the *Miniota*. He writes so vividly and so well that I give you his account unaltered :—

"I beg leave to report that at 3.40 p.m., June 4, 1917, in [such and such] a latitude and longitude, we sighted a submarine, bearing down upon us from our port beam, and firing as she approached. We brought her astern, and opened fire in return. Finding her shots were falling short of us, as also ours of her, we ceased firing, with a view to allowing her to overtake us somewhat, and so to bring her within range. Later, finding her shots were falling unpleasantly near, we opened fire on her, and found that we just had her within range, our last shot only missing her by a few yards. She evidently did not relish taking any further chances, for she opened her broadside to us, fired both guns, and dived. So the incident closed with what we considered vantage to us. We expended thirty rounds in the duel, to somewhere about fifty or sixty rounds of the enemy.

"At about 7 p.m. we noticed that an American ship, which was about three and a half miles away on our port bow, appeared to be in difficulties. We were overtaking her fast, and on closer inspection found that she had stopped. We concluded that she had been hit, and that doubtless the submarine would be endeavouring to bring off a double event, in view of which we put our helm hard aport, and while swinging round to it sighted his periscope some two hundred or three hundred yards away, aft of our beam.

"There is no doubt that the submarine, on getting a view of us through her periscope, found herself in a false position for attack, being right under our gun. So she wisely submerged, swirled the water up twice under our stern, but did not show herself, realizing that, with a point-blank bead on her, she was at our mercy.

"In the meantime our wireless operator intercepted a brief message from the American, saying that she was sinking. Concluding that there was something amiss with her wireless, we sent out a message for her, giving her position, and saying that her boats were in the water.

"However, the time spent by the submarine paying her attentions to us gave the American ship the opportunity of putting her house in order. Doubtless, finding that she was not so badly wounded as she had thought, and not being further attacked, she had started to hoist her boats in, and was steaming slowly ahead. Next we saw the submarine come to the surface some distance astern of her, and circle round on her port side, whence she started shelling the American ship, which replied. The shelling went on for some time.

"The American ship appeared to be hit several times. At last she ceased firing, and steamed away. So far as we could see, she was not much the worse for the encounter.

"The next day the American ship sent out a message to the effect that she had sunk the submarine, and that everything was 'O.K.' with her; so that, accepting such to be the case, it follows that the submarine, in her greed to take the two of us, lost both, and herself to boot."

Thus, in this clear, vigorous, and modest account, does the master of the *Miniota* relate how he outmanœuvred and outfought a submarine, and stood by an American friend while he sent the "sea-jackal" to the bottom. In the words of the American, "everything was quite O.K."

* * * * * * *

The two foregoing stories ended happily. Not so the incident which I am about to relate. I have now to tell you how a German submarine commander reached a depth of infamy which will blacken his memory until the sea runs dry.

On the evening of July 31, 1917, the steamship *Belgian Prince* was attacked by a submarine when she was some two hundred miles from the north coast of Ireland. The master called away his two boats, and the crew embarked, leaving the captain on board to clear up his affairs. Later on the port lifeboat returned and took him off. The commander of the submarine ordered the boats alongside, and took the master and the crew of forty-three men on board. They were received by the Germans with furious abuse, and were robbed of all that they possessed. The master was sent below as a prisoner, and the commander ordered the seamen to take off their lifebelts and place them on deck. Striding along the deck, he cursed them, and kicked the lifebelts overboard. Four of the crew, however, managed to hide their belts under their coats.

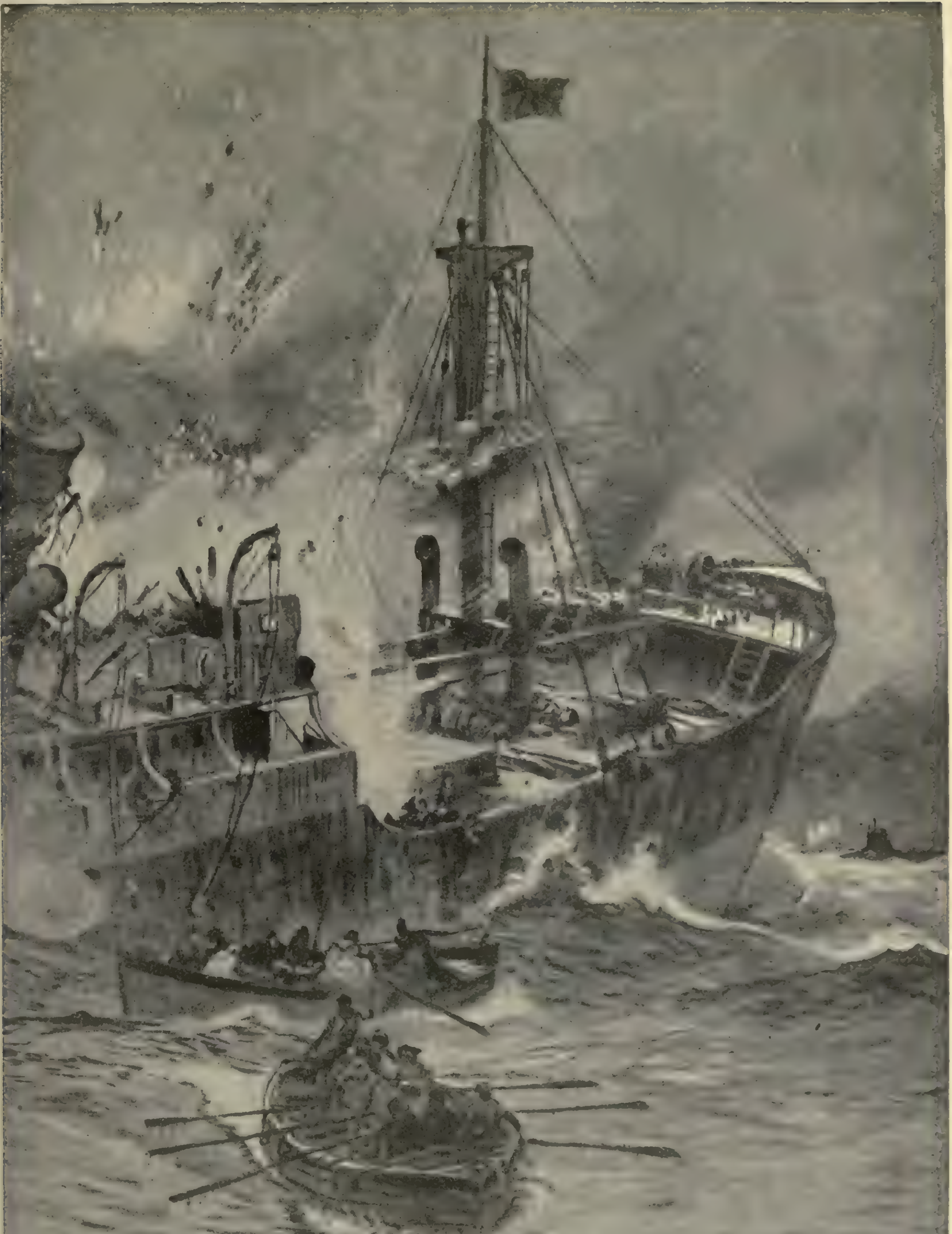
When the Germans had worked their wicked will on the *Belgian Prince*, the submarine got under way, her captives still being lined up on deck. Half an hour later a signal was received. Immediately the German officer slid into the conning-tower, clanged down the steel hatch above his head, and gave the order to submerge the vessel. She sank down and down until the water covered the deck. It was now clear that he intended to drown his captives. When the deck was awash the wretched men leaped into the sea. The chief engineer, the cook, a Russian seaman, and a little apprentice boy had concealed their lifebelts; consequently they were able to strike out for the *Belgian Prince*, now lying about a mile and a half away. The thirty-nine men without lifebelts were never seen again.

The chief engineer held up the apprentice, and swam steadily on towards the abandoned ship. The water was ice cold, and as they swam the boy grew more and more feeble. Before the gray dawn broke over the desolate waters he was unconscious. The cold had been too much for him. The chief engineer loosened his hold of the boy's lifeless body and swam on alone. He was within reach of the *Belgian Prince* when suddenly a bright flame shot up, and she sank stern first.

As she disappeared it seemed to the swimmer that his last hope had vanished. Nevertheless he struggled on. Despair had almost seized him when he saw smoke on the horizon. Summoning his remaining strength he swam desperately towards it, and a short time afterwards was picked up by one of our patrol boats. The cook was saved in the same way.

Now let us follow the adventures of the Russian. As he was a faster swimmer than his companions, he outdistanced them, and reached the *Belgian Prince* after being eight hours in the water. He struggled on board, changed into dry clothing, and refreshed himself. Then he saw the submarine draw alongside the doomed ship. He ran aft and hid himself, while German sailors looted the vessel. They carried off all the stores, clothing, and provisions on board, and then, sheering off, fired two shells into the ship. She broke in two and sank. Her work done, the submarine disappeared.

The Russian now found himself again in the water, battling for dear life amidst the swirl of the sinking ship and the floating wreckage. Happily he saw the master's dinghy floating near



Attack on a Merchantman by Enemy Submarines.

(*By permission of The Sphere.*)

by. It had been left adrift by the submarine. He swam to the little boat, climbed in, and lay in the bottom until rescued by one of our patrol boats.

Thus three men alone were saved of the forty-three who stood on the deck of the submarine when she sank and left them to their cruel fate, after the monster who commanded her had robbed them of their only means of keeping afloat. You cannot conceive of a more atrocious crime; it was "murder most foul."

* * * * * * *

Now let me tell you how the *Netronian* escaped. About half-past eleven on the morning of June 20, 1917, she was approaching the west coast of Ireland. The weather, though gray, was clear; there was a north-easterly breeze, and a heavy swell on the sea. Suddenly a shot from a submarine fell short of her. The *Netronian's* gunners instantly replied. The U-boat then endeavoured to get between its prey and the shore, hoping to cut it off from help. When the firing had continued for twenty minutes, a shell from the submarine set fire to some bales of cotton sweepings in the *Netronian's* hold. The master saw smoke rising from the hatches; but as all his men were busy passing ammunition to the gunners, he could not spare any of them to extinguish the fire.

The ship was now heading westward. Shells were falling close about her, and her gun was outranged. The master therefore made use of his smoke-boxes. When the fuel in them was lighted he flung them overboard, and speedily a dense cloud of black smoke arose. Behind this dusky shield, with a fire in his hold, he fled, full speed ahead, for half an hour. Then the thick black pall thinned, and he saw the submarine within range.

The *Netronian's* gunners now opened fire, and their sixth shot narrowly missed the enemy. So good was their aim that the U-boat went about, and after retreating some distance dived, and was no more seen. Later on, the *Netronian* was escorted into harbour by a British man-of-war.

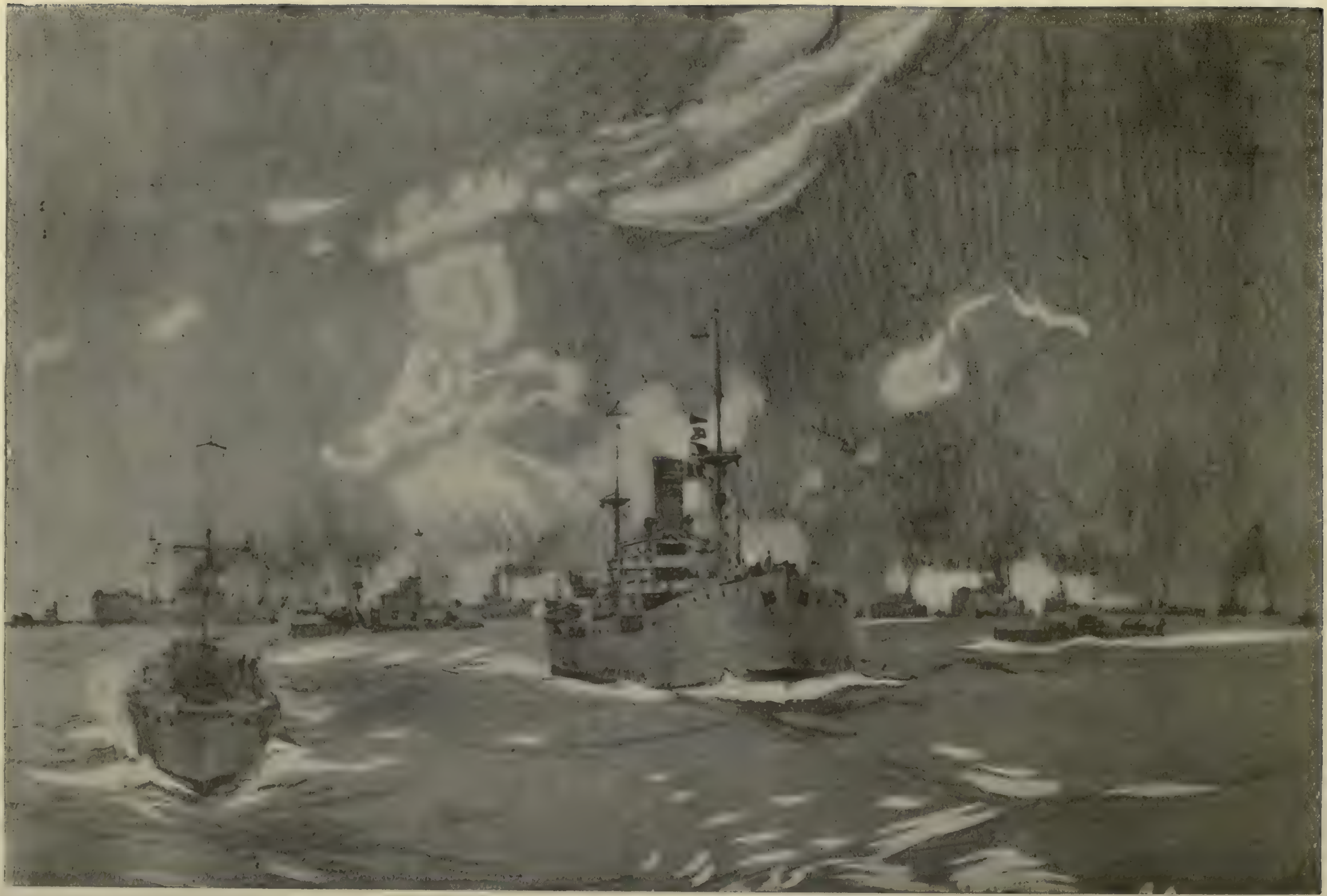
CHAPTER XXIX.

SUBMARINES, CONVOYS, AND NAVAL RAIDS.

ON February 6, 1918, the Government published an account of submarine-hunting in the Arctic Ocean. You will remember that while Russia was fighting on our side it was all-important to keep open the ocean route to Archangel and other ports of north Russia. " Kaiser-fish " infested this route, ready to attack every merchant vessel that showed itself. During winter, when the sea was frozen, navigation was, of course, suspended ; but when the thaw set in the U-boats at once began their operations. Enemy submarine mine-layers deposited their mines off the entrances to the ports, and merchantmen began to arrive with their sides battered by shell-fire, their crews having many tales to tell of gallant actions and hairbreadth escapes. Some of the vessels did not arrive at all. Then the trawlers working in these northern waters searched the face of the sea, and sometimes were able to bring in a few starved and frost-bitten men who had been exposed for days in open boats to the rigour of an Arctic springtime. Often the trawlers searched in vain, and sometimes were able to report that U-boats had met the fate which they had prepared for others.

Among the ice our patrols discovered a telephone buoy belonging to a " Kaiser-fish " that had been sunk. A buoy of this kind is only released as a last resource when the U-boat is unable to rise. It has a watertight telephone connected with the hull of the sunken submarine, so that communication can be established between the surface and the imprisoned occupants of the vessel down below. On the buoy is a large brass plate, upon which the following words are inscribed in German :—

" Undersea boat the —— is sunk here. Do not touch,



General View of a Convoy during a Voyage.

(By permission of The Sphere.)

but telegraph at once to the commandant of the U-boats' base at Kiel."

One of the submarines sunk in the Arctic Ocean met its fate in a curious way. The story might be entitled, "The Biter Bitten." She torpedoed a ship, but discovered, too late, that it was loaded with munitions. As soon as the crew saw the periscope of their attacker they took to their boats. Then, says the German account, "our humane U-boat rose to the surface to see what assistance she could render"—little guessing that the torpedoed ship was full of explosives. Almost immediately there was a terrific explosion, which so damaged the submarine that she sank, "leaving her crew struggling in the water *with their pistols in their mouths*. They implored to be taken into the boats, but were left to their fate by the inhuman Englishmen." Such is the German account of the affair.

Now for the facts. The "humane U-boat" rose to the surface, not to render assistance, but to shell the stricken vessel. Her first shell exploded the cargo of munitions. A large motor lorry on the upper deck of the munitions ship was blown by the force of the explosion right on to the submarine; it crashed through the plates, and sank her instantly. The crew of the sunken submarine swam to the boats of the munition ship, and begged to be taken on board; but the boats were so crowded that it was impossible to take another soul into them. Even if there had been room it would surely have been very unwise to take on board a number of enemies *with their pistols in their mouths*. As it was, the boats drifted about for four days, and the men in them were starving when they reached land. So much for this German instance of British "frightfulness."

In the preceding chapter I told you that in order to protect our merchant ships during their voyages we adopted the convoy system. The practice of sailing in convoy was very common in the Middle Ages, when all ships were more or less armed. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ships almost always sailed in company. Dutch, French, or British vessels were collected at a certain spot, and were there joined by warships, which accompanied them until they had passed through the danger zone and were compelled to separate in order to proceed to their various ports. The ships engaged in the East and West Indian trade always sailed together.

They were escorted by warships of the fleet through the Channel, and when beyond the Scilly Islands were guarded by a smaller force, which convoyed them as far as Madeira, where they separated. Some very stirring stories are told of fights between East Indiamen and privateers or pirates. In 1804 the East India Company's fleet in the China Seas engaged, beat off, and pursued a powerful enemy squadron, which included two frigates of the line and a battleship of seventy-four guns.

During the last three months of the year 1917 the Germans made destructive attacks on our convoys. On 15th October nine Scandinavian merchant vessels were being convoyed in the North Sea by two British destroyers, *Mary Rose* and *Strongbow*. It will interest you to learn that there was a vessel called *Mary Rose* in the English fleet which fought the Spanish Armada. She was one of the Queen's ships, a vessel of 600 tons, carrying a company of 250 all told. An earlier *Mary Rose*, after a very gallant career, capsized in July 1545 just off Portsmouth, as she was going out to engage the French fleet. In 1903 some of the fine guns which she carried were recovered, and are still preserved.

But to return to our story. About six in the morning of 15th October, just as day was breaking and the ships were about midway between the Shetland Islands and the Norwegian coast, three very fast and heavily armed German cruisers made an attack upon them. The first shot wrecked the wireless room of *Strongbow*, and did other damage. Immediately our destroyers engaged the enemy, and with great gallantry fought an unequal contest. *Strongbow* was sunk, and the two raiders concentrated their fire on *Mary Rose*, which was utterly wrecked by the explosion of her boiler. Then one by one all the merchantmen but three were sunk, without warning of any kind, and quite regardless of the lives of their crews and passengers. Five Norwegian, one Danish, and three Swedish vessels were thus sent to the bottom. Happily some of our patrol boats arrived in time to rescue about thirty Norwegians and others.

On February 14, 1918, the Admiralty published a full account of the splendid fight made by *Mary Rose*. It appears that she left a Norwegian port in charge of a west-bound convoy of merchant ships on the afternoon of 14th October. Next morning at dawn flashes of gun-fire were sighted astern. The captain, Lieutenant-Commander Charles Fox, who was on the bridge at the time, thought that the flashes came from the guns of a submarine which was shelling the convoy. Promptly he turned his ship, beat to quarters, ordered full steam ahead, and hurried towards the flashes.

He was proceeding at full speed when suddenly three enemy light cruisers were seen emerging from the mist and speeding towards him. At once he opened fire with every gun that he could bring to bear, the range being about four miles. Greatly surprised by this determined attack, the German cruisers held their fire until they were three miles from *Mary Rose*. Then their guns began to boom, and a barrage of bursting shells barred the destroyer's way. She held on, however, most gallantly until she was only a mile from the enemy.

Up to this time the German shooting was poor; but as *Mary Rose* changed her course so as to bring her torpedo tubes to bear, a salvo struck her. Her engine-room was wrecked, and she lay like a log on the water. All the guns, with one exception, were put out of action, and their crews killed or wounded. The after-gun, which still remained uninjured, continued to fire, under the direction of Sub-Lieutenant Marsh, until it ceased to bear.

"The captain came down from the wrecked bridge and passed aft, encouraging and cheering his deafened men. He stopped beside the wrecked remains of the mid-ship gun, and shouted to the survivors, 'God bless my heart, lads, get her going again; we're not done yet!'

"The enemy were now pouring a concentrated fire into the motionless vessel. One of the boilers, struck by a shell, exploded, and through the inferno of escaping steam, smoke, and the vapour of bursting shell, came that familiar, cheery voice: 'We're not done yet.'

"As the German light cruisers sped past, two able seamen (French and Bailey), who alone survived among the torpedo tube crews, on their own initiative laid and fired the remaining torpedo. French was killed immediately, and Bailey badly wounded.

"Realizing that the enemy had passed ahead, and that the 4-inch gun could no longer be brought to bear on them, the captain went below and set about destroying his secret papers.

The first-lieutenant (Lieutenant Bavin), seeing one of the light cruisers returning towards them, called the gunner (Mr. Handcock), and bade him sink the ship. The captain then came on deck and gave the order, 'Abandon ship.' All the boats had been shattered by shell-fire at their davits, but the survivors launched a raft and paddled clear of the ship."

The German light cruiser detailed to finish off *Mary Rose* now approached the doomed vessel, and at a distance of 300 yards poured shot after shot into her riddled hull. At 7.15 a.m. she went down with her colours flying.

The captain, the first-lieutenant, and gunner were lost with the ship, and only a handful of men in charge of Sub-Lieutenant Freeman escaped by means of the raft. Some hours later they fell in with a lifeboat belonging to one of the ships of the convoy. With sail and oar they made their way to the Norwegian coast, which they reached forty-eight hours later. Every kindness was shown to them by the Norwegian people. All the survivors were full of praise for the cheery courage of Sub-Lieutenant Freeman, and for the glorious endurance of Able-Seaman Bailey. Though this splendid sailor was suffering from several shrapnel wounds in the leg, he insisted on taking his turn at the oar, and most ably assisted his commanding officer in keeping up the spirits of his comrades.

The story must not close without a warm tribute to the self-sacrificing heroism of Lieutenant-Commander Fox. When going, as he supposed, to the rescue of one of the vessels in his convoy, he found himself opposed by overwhelming odds. He might have turned tail and sought safety in flight. But that is not the way of the British navy. "He held on unflinchingly, and he died, leaving to the annals of his service an episode not less glorious than that in which Sir Richard Grenville perished."

* * * * * * *

When the news of the disaster was announced many people were inclined to blame the Admiralty for giving insufficient protection to the convoy. Why, it was asked, was not assistance summoned from the Grand Fleet, and why were the raiders not attacked before they fell upon the convoy? An inquiry was immediately held, and a court-martial was promised; but public opinion was not satisfied, and on 1st November Sir Eric Geddes, from his place in Parliament, made a statement.

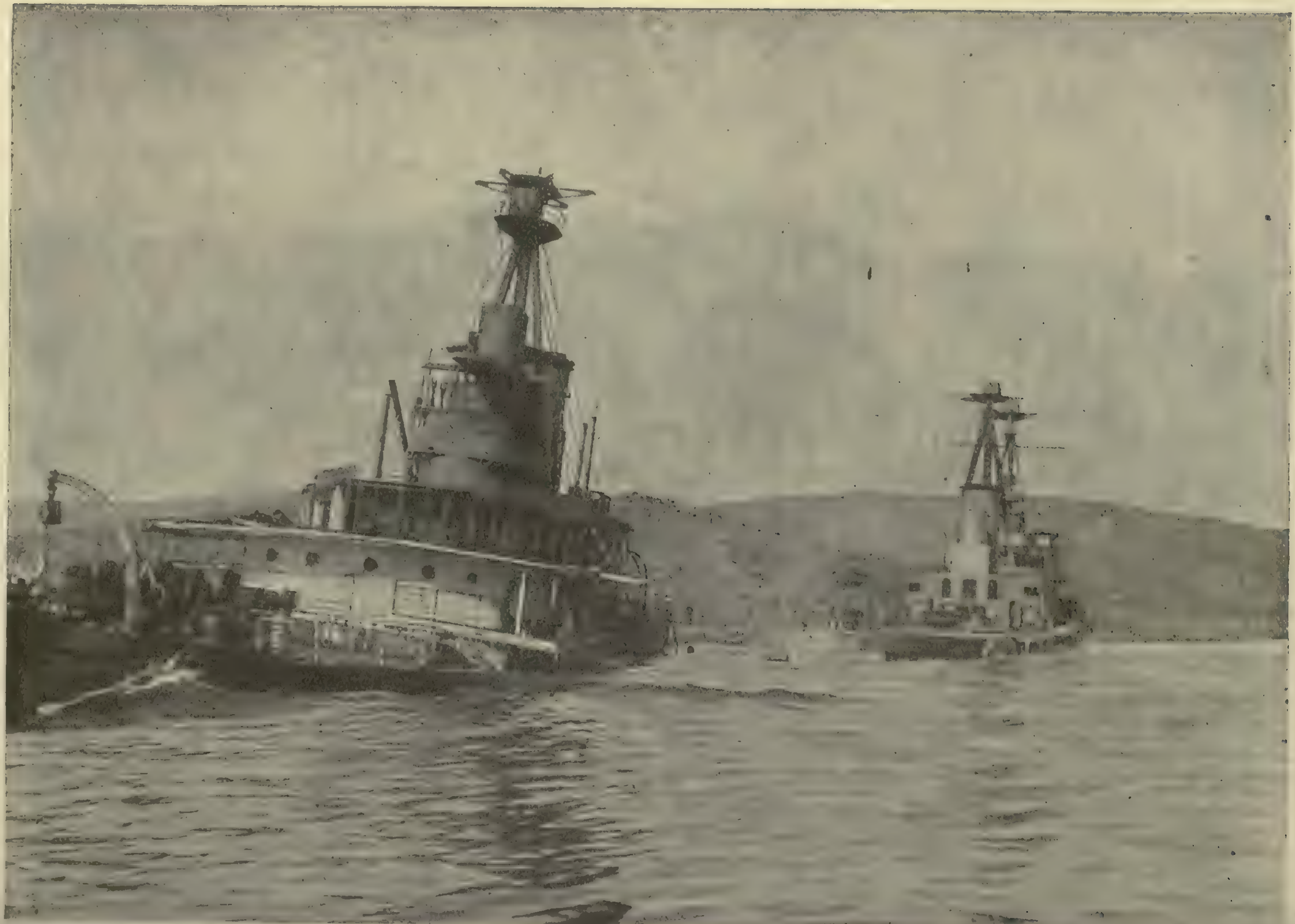
He pointed out that in the case of *Strongbow* her wireless was destroyed at the first shot, and that *Mary Rose* sank soon afterwards. Neither of the destroyers had time to send off a message. There was a third armed British vessel fitted with wireless in the company, but she had been detached to screen one of the vessels which had been forced to stop owing to the shifting of her cargo. The consequence was that no message reached either the Orkneys or the Grand Fleet or the Admiralty until 7 p.m.

In reply to the question why were not the raiders engaged before they could attack the convoy, Sir Eric reminded the House that the area of the North Sea is 140,000 square nautical miles, and that from Cape Wrath to Dover is a distance of 566 nautical miles. It is, he said, impossible for any fleet, however large, to keep watch and ward over all this wide expanse of sea. A cruiser squadron, with its attendant destroyers, cannot see what is going on in the darkness for more than five miles around, and it is therefore easy for swift enemy vessels to make sudden raids and escape. Since the convoy system began in April 1917, more than 4,500 vessels had been escorted by the British navy on this particular route, and no vessels had been lost by surface attack up to the raid of 15th October. To show that the Navy was actively engaged in the ceaseless patrol of the North Sea, from north to south and from east to west, he stated that our battleships, cruisers, and destroyers had actually steamed one million ship miles in home waters during a recent month, while our smaller patrol craft had covered six times that distance during the same period.

The Norwegian Government protested strongly against the sinking of its ships and the inhuman destruction of its seamen, but all to no purpose.

> "You may as well use question with the wolf
> Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb . . .
> You may as well do anything most hard,
> As seek to soften that—than which what's harder ?—
> The *German* heart."

Two of the most gallant of all Norwegian seamen—Captain Roald Amundsen, the discoverer of the South Pole, and Captain Otto Sverdrup, the Arctic explorer—showed their deep disgust at this inhumanity by returning the decorations which



Dummy Ships forming a Breakwater in the Harbour of one of the Ægean Isles.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

they had received from Germany. Captain Amundsen wrote as follows :—

> " As a Norwegian sailor, I permit myself to return my German decorations, the Prussian Order of the Crown, First Class, the Bavarian Order of Luitpold, and the Emperor Wilhelm's gold medal for art and science, as a personal protest against the German murders of peaceful Norwegian seamen, the latest being in the North Sea, on October 17, 1917."

* * * * * * *

Though we had lost two destroyers, and a number of valuable neutral ships had been sunk, you must not suppose that the naval forces of the enemy were allowed to come and go without molestation. Almost every day our light cruisers, destroyers, and patrols had " scraps " with enemy craft which ventured out from under the protection of their shore batteries. Again and again they were driven back, sometimes considerably damaged. For example, on Saturday, 17th November, our light craft pushed into Heligoland Bight, with the object of penetrating the enemy's home waters and advancing until they were stopped by superior forces. *En route* they hoped to " mop up " such of the enemy's light cruisers or mine-sweepers as they might chance to meet.

British submarines had made many excursions into these waters, and had discovered roughly the whereabouts of the German minefields. We knew that we should easily be able to thread the passages of these minefields if we could sight enemy ships and follow in their wake as they manœuvred or retreated. About seven in the morning our forces assembled at the prearranged spot, and half an hour later saw ahead, moving to the north-west, a procession of German mine-sweepers, light cruisers, and destroyers. At once our ships went full speed ahead and opened fire. The enemy was plainly astonished to find the British on the scene. Immediately his vessels turned, and, stoking furiously, headed for home in a cloud of smoke which blended with the gray North Sea mist like a curtain. In hot pursuit the British destroyers overhauled and sank an outpost mine-sweeper, and plunged into the smoke of the fleeing enemy. When the smoke belt was crossed they had a fairly clear view of the enemy's flotilla.

A light cruiser was now sighted, trailing eastward, and heavily on fire aft. While the destroyers were getting into position for a torpedo attack upon her, they encountered two cruisers coming up from the west. These ships at once concentrated a heavy fire on the destroyers, which now turned and ran towards their supporting light cruisers. At full speed they picked their way back between spouting columns of water caused by the falling shells. So skilfully were the destroyers handled in these narrow, mine-strewn waters, that not one of them was hit and not a single man was wounded.

Meanwhile the British light cruisers were pushing ahead in the shifting haze, with the object of cutting off the enemy from his bases. Salvos fell all about them, and from time to time they saw the trail of a torpedo flicker past their bows.

For two hours the running fight continued. Heligoland was but twenty-eight miles to the south-eastward, and the outer fringe of the German minefields was twenty miles astern, when the masts and funnels of a German battle squadron were sighted coming over the horizon at full speed. Shortly afterwards a hail of big shell began to pitch across the path of our cruisers. The time had come for our little gray ships to turn and run for home. They had "drawn" the enemy, and had done all that they set out to do. The enemy, however, was not drawn very far; for the German battle-fleet only remained long enough to satisfy itself that the unexpected visitors were really departing, before retreating and vanishing below the horizon. As our forces steamed back to their bases an enemy aeroplane swooped down to within two hundred feet of one of our light cruisers, and having dropped its bombs, which missed their aim, soared up again into the low-hanging clouds.

The crew of the sunken mine-sweeper were rescued by a destroyer. The German naval lieutenant in charge was very angry. "Ach," he spluttered, "it is not fair—shooting big shells at leetle ships." A remark which gives us a curious insight into the German mind. Whatever the German does is right; if we treat him to a dose of his own medicine we are unfair.

The British casualties were light, in spite of the desperate nature of the enterprise. Amongst those who lost their lives was a bugler, a lad of fourteen. Shortly after he had sounded "Action" a big shell burst near him and killed him. After the battle he was discovered with his battered and twisted bugle beside him. The instrument was sent home to his mother as a precious memorial of a brave boy who gave his life for his country. The dead were buried at sea by the dim light of screened lamps, while destroyers circled round in the darkness. Through the rest of the night our ships swept north, but by the following morning were back at the entrance to the minefields. The day was bright and clear, and they could see for many a mile ; but not a mast or a wisp of smoke could they espy towards the south-east, where the enemy warships lay. The Germans had no desire to give battle, and at noon our vessels withdrew and returned to their bases.

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Early in February 1918 the *New York Times* revealed a secret which had been jealously kept since the early days of the war. It told how the Admiralty *camouflaged* fourteen old wooden vessels so that they resembled battleships, and sent them cruising in the North Sea as a decoy. So cleverly were these vessels " faked " that no one could tell, even at a short distance, that they were not actual battleships. But the turrets were lath and canvas, and the guns were timber. Save for a few rifles, this " Suicide Squadron " had no means of offence or defence. It never fired a gun, and yet it completely deceived the Germans, who dared not leave their minefields when they saw it cruising in the distance. No such jest has ever been played on an enemy since the days of the Trojan War.

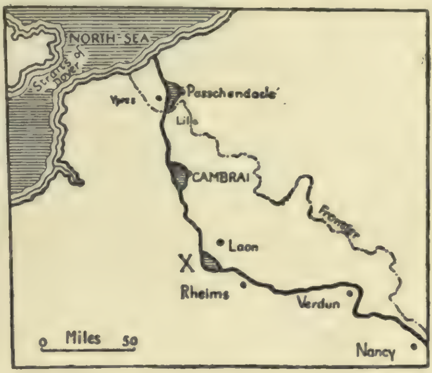
Our sailors called the ships of this harmless Armada " mock turtles," and made much fun of them. Nevertheless they helped Britain to rule the waves during the first year of the war, and completely baffled the enemy. They played, so we are told, a very important part in luring out the enemy at the Battle of the Dogger Bank. Not even when an enemy submarine torpedoed a dummy at the Dardanelles did the Germans discover the secret, for they announced that a " British battleship of the —— class was sunk by one of our submarines." The guns and turrets of this sham Dreadnought floated for days !

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GATEWAY TO THE VALLEY OF THE SCHELDT.

I NOW propose to tell you the story of the biggest and most important battle fought on the Western front since that great struggle on the Marne which saved Paris and led to the trench war which you have followed through so many pages. No doubt the Germans imagined that our 1917 offensive had petered out in the swamps of the Ypres region. They thought that as we had won the high ground from Messines Ridge to Passchendaele, and that, as we had been forced to send troops to Italy, we should be content to hold our gains during the winter months, and postpone all attempts at a forward movement until the new year brought dry weather and welcome reinforcements from America. Yet ten days after our failure to capture Westroosebeke, as described on page 221, we struck a sudden blow more than fifty miles to the south of Ypres, and not only smashed the Hindenburg Line, but leaped forward four or five miles on a wide front. Our success was hailed with rapture at home, and there was corresponding disappointment when, after a long and bitter struggle, we were forced to yield up about half of the captured ground. Nevertheless, when the long struggle died down we were holding between ten thousand and eleven thousand yards of the Hindenburg Line, and had wrested from twelve to thirteen square miles of territory from the invader. Though the early promise of the battle had not been realized, we had won a substantial success, and had rounded off the year 1917 with victory.

Here is a sketch map which shows the lines of opposing trenches running from the North Sea to Lorraine. You observe that it consists of two limbs, the one almost at right angles to the other. These two limbs are hinged, so to speak, at **X**, which is not far from Malmaison, where the French captured 11,000 Germans and 100 guns on 23rd October. Half-way between **X** and the North Sea is the old city of Cambrai, which stands on the right or eastern bank of the Scheldt Canal, arms of which fringe the west of the town. It is a very old city, and was known in Roman times as *Camaracum*. Charlemagne captured it in the ninth century, and it had a stormy history during the next three hundred years. In 1478 it came into the possession of the Emperor Charles V., who made it a strong citadel. Between that date and the year 1678, when it passed into the possession of France, it changed hands again and again. In history the city is famous for the League of Cambrai, a union of kings formed in 1508 to fight the Venetians; and for the Ladies' Peace, which was concluded between Francis I. of France and the Emperor Charles V. This peace is so called because it was brought about by the mother of Francis and the aunt of Charles.



The old fortifications of the city have long since disappeared, and, save for the huge citadel to the east of the place, a fifteenth-century chateau, and several fortified gates, there are few signs of its antiquity. Handsome boulevards now skirt the city, and there is a large public garden. The former cathedral was destroyed after the French Revolution, and the present building dates from the nineteenth century. It contains several fine monuments and pictures. Amongst the monuments is one to Fénelon, who was archbishop from 1695 to 1715. When a young man Fénelon was appointed tutor to the grandson of Louis XIV., for whose instruction he wrote the *Adventures of Telemachus*,* and other works of the same kind.

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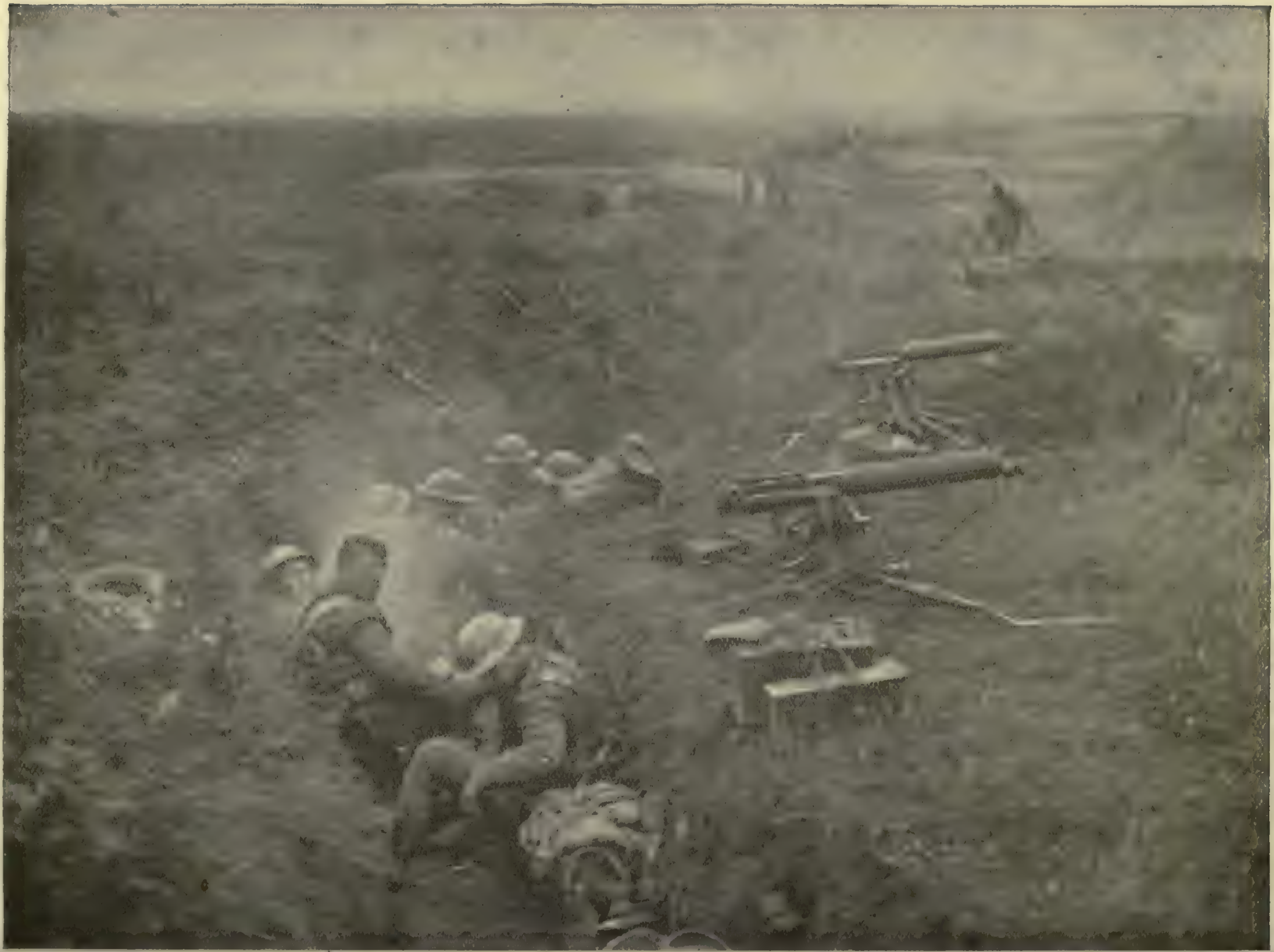
* Son of Odysseus and Penelope. After his father's wanderings had lasted twenty years he sought tidings of him in Greece. Returning to his home in Ithaca, he found that his father had returned, and helped him to slay the princes who had invaded his mother's house. He succeeded his father as king of the island.



British Troops in a Section of the Hindenburg Line. [*Official photograph.*

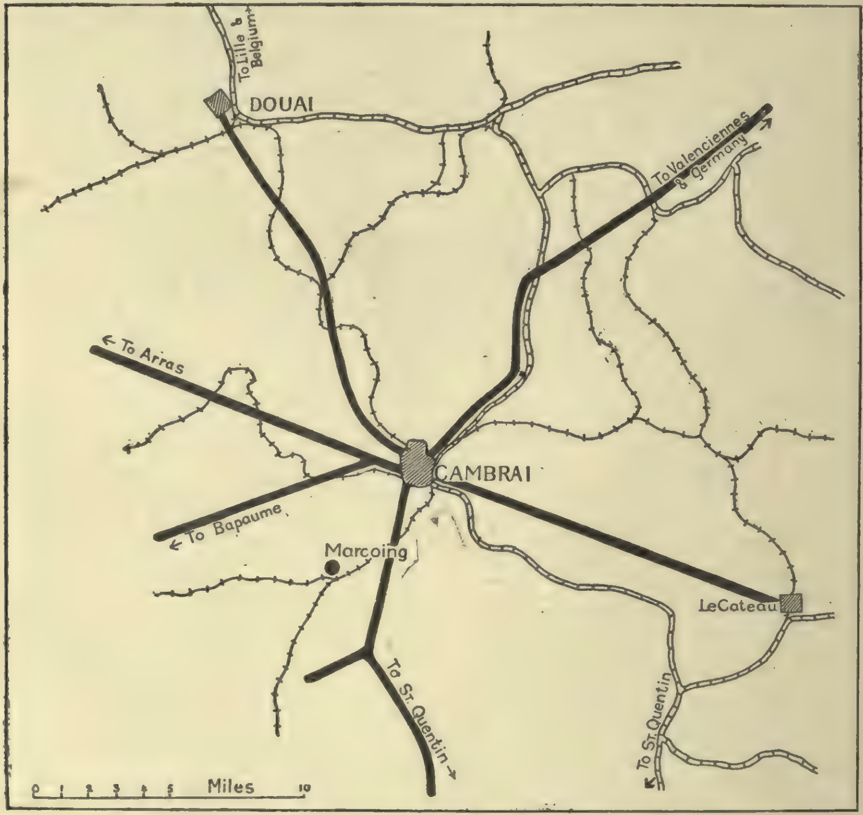
Cambrai gives its name to the muslin known in Britain as *cambric*, and in France as *batiste*, after the name of its inventor. Its chief manufacture is still the weaving of muslin, but it has wool-spinning, bleaching, dyeing, and other small industries as well. Its library contains over 40,000 volumes, and the city is well supplied with schools and colleges. During the retreat from Mons our soldiers passed through Cambrai, and ever since that day it had been in the hands of the Germans.

Cambrai is not an important industrial town, but it was of very great value to the Germans as a distributing centre. Look at the little map on page 320, and notice the large number of roads and railways which converge upon it. You see six main roads radiating from it like the spokes of a wheel. Three of these roads run towards the west, and along them passed the streams of motor lorries which supplied the troops holding the Hindenburg Line. A fourth road runs to Douai, and onwards towards Lille and the Belgian and German bases ; a fifth road leads to Valenciennes, and thence to southern Belgium and Germany ; while the sixth road furnishes good cross-communication between Cambrai and Le Cateau.

Now look at the railways. The great trunk line from Paris to Germany runs through Cambrai, and, ten or twelve miles to the north, splits into two lines, one of which runs through Douai to Lille, and onward to Belgium and Germany, while the other makes its way to Valenciennes, and gives access to southern Belgium and Germany. Another main line links Cambrai with the south and east—that is, with the German defences running eastward along the Aisne valley, and thence to the Vosges mountains.

Cambrai, you observe, is the knot of the road and railway system serving a wide region. Every soldier, gun, and shell sent from Belgium or Germany to the front from Cambrai to St. Quentin and from St. Quentin to Rheims had to pass through Cambrai. If we could capture this city, the enemy would lose the roads and railways over a wide region, and would be forced to retire, not only from the neighbourhood of Cambrai, but for a considerable distance to the north and south of it. A successful attack on Cambrai promised great things. If you turn to the map on page 223, you will see that a wedge thrust towards Cambrai would turn the switch line running from Quéant to Drocourt. This line covers Douai and the railway communications with Lille and Belgium. A considerable advance to the north-west would break down all the defensive system between Cambrai and Lille.

In this region our line had been practically stationary all summer. No big battles had been fought, and the ground had not been ploughed up by shells or churned into mud by the passage of guns, supply vehicles, and the feet of myriads of men. You cannot imagine a greater contrast than the Ypres battlefields and the country that lay in front of Cambrai. In Flanders the ground was a hideous mass of shell-holes and deep slime; in Artois it was firm, unbroken, and grassy. While the Ypres battlefield was impossible, the Cambrai battlefield was ideal.


To Lille & Belgium
DOUAI
To Valenciennes & Germany
To Arras
CAMBRAI
To Bapaume
Marcoing
LeCateau
To St. Quentin
To St. Quentin
0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles 10

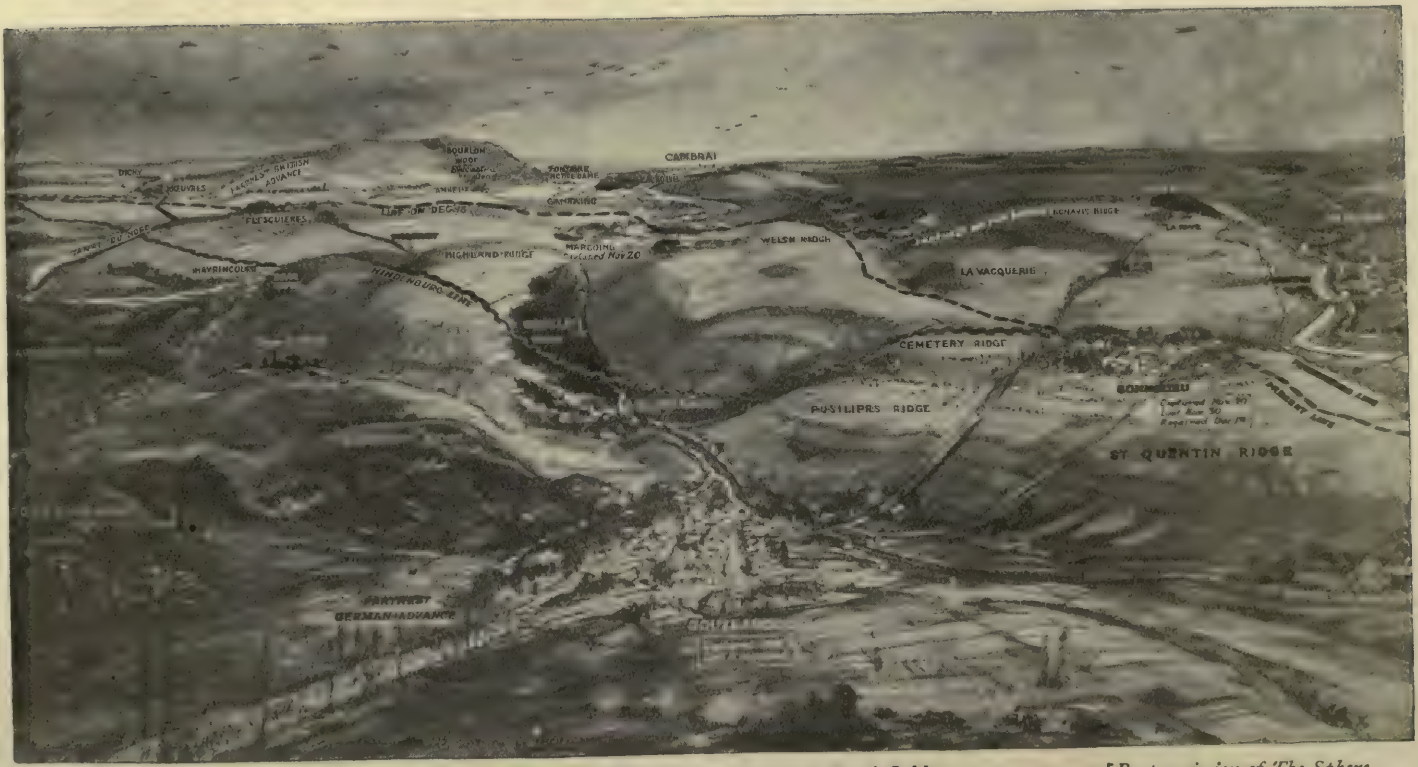
Map showing Cambrai as a Road and Railway Centre.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW WE SMASHED THE HINDENBURG LINE.

BEFORE I begin to describe the doings of the great day that opened the battle, let us have clear ideas about the lie of the land across which the advance was to be made. Examine carefully the bird's-eye view on page 322, and give your attention to the upper part of the picture on the left. In the foreground is a portion of the wide plateau over which the enemy retreated in February and March 1917. Except that every village had been burned and plundered, every church had been destroyed, and almost all the fruit orchards had been cut down, this region showed but few traces of war. A correspondent says : " It is like an American prairie or a southern savanna where no human beings have lived. For three years there has been no cultivation, so that the vegetation has grown rank, unharvested, and ungrazed by beasts—a strange, wild upland plain, yellowish gray now with the withered grasses of autumn, and broken only here and there by the ruins of buried villages. It has been, and is, quite tenantless, except by birds and hares and mice."

Look at the top left-hand corner of the picture, and find the village of Inchy. The Canal du Nord, which runs in a deep cutting and is about eighty feet wide, passes this village and also that of Mœuvres, about a mile and a half to the north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road. It then continues across the plain to the edge of Havrincourt Wood, beyond which we need not follow it at the moment. Its bed is brick-lined, and at the time when our story opens was dry. On both sides of the cutting are spoil banks and slag heaps, from the top of which on a clear day the spires and glinting windows of Cambrai can plainly be seen.



CAMBRAI
BOURLON WOOD
FONTAINE NOTRE DAME
DICHY
MOEUVRES
FARTHEST BRITISH ADVANCE
ANNEUX
CANTAING
LINE ON DEC 6
FLESQUIERES
CANAL DU NORD
HAVRINCOURT
HINDENBURG LINE
HIGHLAND RIDGE
MARCOING Captured Nov 20
WELSH RIDGE
BONAVIS RIDGE
LA VACQUERIE
CEMETERY RIDGE
PUSILIPRS RIDGE
GONNELIEU
Captured Nov 20 Lost Nov 30 Regained Dec 1st
ST QUENTIN RIDGE
FARTHEST GERMAN ADVANCE

Bird's-eye View of the Cambrai Battlefield.

[*By permission of The Sphere.*

Imagine yourself on the top of one of these spoil banks looking towards Cambrai. On your right is the great wood of Havrincourt, and on your left the main road from Bapaume to Cambrai. This important highway follows an old Roman road, and is marked by irregular lines of poplars. On your left front rises the most conspicuous feature in the whole landscape—a dark, rounded hump partly covered by woods. This is Bourlon Hill, soon to be the scene of the fiercest and most dogged fighting. Mœuvres stands at its western end, and the village of Bourlon, which is hidden by the hill, lies on its northern slopes. The road skirts the southern face of the hill, and passes the village of Anneux, which stands on the south side of the road. Farther on is Fontaine, only about two miles from the suburbs of Cambrai. To the south of Fontaine is La Folie Wood, on the banks of the Scheldt Canal, which runs towards the north-east and skirts the old city.

You notice that from the Canal du Nord to the Scheldt Canal the country appears to be a flat, level plain. It is not so flat as it appears, but rolls in folds and waves all the way to Cambrai. On this plain stand several villages to which I must draw your attention. To the north-east of Havrincourt you see Flesquières, and about a couple of miles to its south-east, hidden by Highland Ridge, the village of Ribécourt. Two miles to the north-east of Ribécourt is Marcoing, and about midway between this place and Fontaine is Cantaing. Some two miles to the east of Marcoing is Masnières. We made our great advance of 20th November across this plain, and all the little towns and villages which I have mentioned come into the narrative.

Now look at the great obstacle to our advance. Right across the plain, from the Cambrai-Bapaume road to Havrincourt and thence onward, you see the Hindenburg Line, the most formidable series of field defences ever constructed. It consisted of three systems of trenches, the one behind the other, all deep and well made with concreted breastworks. In front were continuous belts of barbed wire 300 feet deep. Our troops dare not advance until corridors had been cut through this deep jungle. We might have destroyed it by continuous artillery fire; but on this occasion we employed another method, which I shall describe later on.

The great advance was confided to the Third Army, under the leadership of Sir Julian Byng, seventh son of the second Earl of Strafford. One of his ancestors was that "Kentish Sir Byng who stood for his king" during the Civil War, and another was General Sir John Byng, who played a leading and brilliant part in the battles of the Peninsula and at Waterloo. Sir Julian thus came of fighting stock, and at the age of twenty-one joined the 10th Hussars. He fought with distinction in the Sudan and in South Africa, and in October 1914 was placed in command of the 3rd Cavalry Division which accompanied the famous 7th Division on its retreat from Antwerp to Ypres.

In May 1915 he succeeded his friend General Allenby as commander of the Cavalry Corps, and after a period of service in the Dardanelles returned to France, where, in May 1916, he was appointed to the command of the Canadians. He speedily gained the confidence and admiration of the gallant men from the Dominion, and became as proud of them as they were of him. Under his leadership the Canadians performed their finest feat—the capture of Vimy Ridge. Lord Northcliffe described him as a "big, well-made man, with strong jaws, strong ears, and a strong walk—distinctly handsome, and with dark-blue eyes." * He was now about to make an advance which was remarkable for its bold and original plan, the secrecy of its preparation, the rapidity of its execution, and the striking success which it attained.

All the great battles of the Western front had so far opened with the thunder of massed artillery. Myriads of shells from every type of gun were hurled on the enemy's entrenchments until they were reduced to utter ruin. Our troops then went forward under the protection of a creeping barrage to make good the ground which had thus been reduced to chaos. The opening of an intense bombardment was a clear signal to the enemy that an attack was about to begin. The Battle of Cambrai began with no such warning, and the result was that much ground was gained before the enemy realized that an assault on a grand scale was taking place.

Let me remind you that the Hindenburg system of defence consisted of three lines. The chief trench of the advance line was deep and narrow, and was furnished with strong points and snipers' posts. From five hundred to one thousand yards

* See portrait, p. 335.

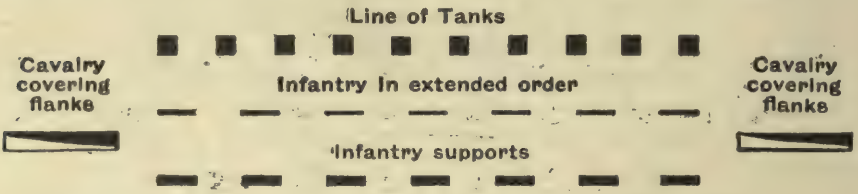
behind this line ran the main line, with trenches ten feet deep, and sufficiently wide to prevent Tanks from straddling them. The breastworks were concreted, and there were many deep dug-outs and trench-mortar emplacements. The support line ran some five hundred to one thousand yards behind the main line, and behind it a tunnel was constructed so that troops could be moved under cover to any section that was in danger. In front of each line stretched broad belts of half-inch wire, with barbs an inch long. In many places these belts were 300 feet deep.

For the purpose of smashing a way through these deep belts we proposed to use a huge fleet of Tanks. I have already described these moving forts. Many of you may have seen a Tank with your own eyes. Probably you have bought a War Bond or a War Certificate at a Tank bank in your own town. If so, you are quite familiar with the main features of these steel-clad monsters. In using them to break down obstacles we were reverting to a very old method of warfare. The ancients frequently employed elephants to form the advance guards of their armies. The huge beasts not only struck terror into the enemy, but by their mighty strength crashed through everything in their way.

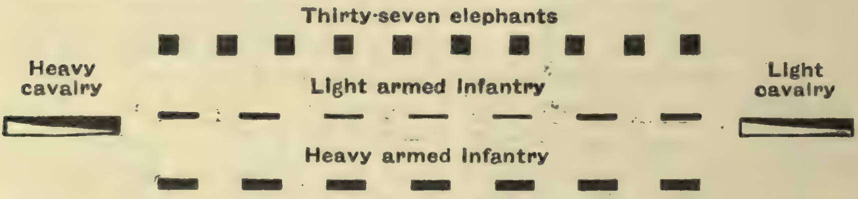
Alexander the Great used elephants in his campaigns, and the Carthaginians employed 140 of them in the siege of Palermo. I shall refer to the elephants in Hannibal's army in a few moments. In India and Burma elephants have frequently been used to break down stockades, and to force a way through the dense undergrowth of jungles. At the siege of Arcot, during which Robert Clive for the first time revealed himself as a born soldier, huge elephants, with their foreheads covered with iron plates, were driven forward to batter down the gates. Clive hoisted the enemy with his own petard by directing his men to fire on the animals. Stung by bullets, they turned tail and trampled down large numbers of the men behind them.

Many boys and girls have read the story of the great Carthaginian general Hannibal. He, you will remember, marched a great army across the Alps, and met the Romans in furious battle at the river Trebia, in North Italy (218 B.C.). He had brought with him thirty-seven elephants, and these animals formed his advance guard. At the close of the day the Romans had suffered a terrible defeat, and thereafter for nearly twelve years Hannibal overran Italy. It will interest you to compare his order of battle at Trebia with that adopted by the British at the Battle of Cambrai.

Earlier in this chapter I gave you some idea of the country between the Canal du Nord and the Scheldt Canal. You must not imagine that our attack was confined to this region; it extended from Mœuvres to the village of Vendhuille, a distance of twelve miles. Meanwhile a show of fighting was made along the whole forty-mile length of General Byng's front from the Scarpe to St. Quentin, so as to deceive the enemy as to the place of the real attack. A special attack took place at Bullecourt, where important sectors of the Hindenburg Line were captured. Immense care had been taken to make all preparations with the greatest secrecy; and this was by no means easy, for hundreds of Tanks had to be assembled, and a Tank is not a noiseless thing. Nevertheless Tanks, guns, horses, ammunition, and supplies of all kinds were concentrated, and by means of very clever *camouflage* were hidden from the prying eyes of German airmen. One false move would have betrayed us; but happily there was no false move. The night preceding the battle was quiet, and we hoped that the Germans would imagine that the next day was to be uneventful. At six on the morning of Tuesday, 20th November, the attack was timed to begin.


Line of Tanks
Cavalry covering flanks
Infantry in extended order
Cavalry covering flanks
Infantry supports

The formation of Hannibal's attack was as follows:—


Thirty-seven elephants
Heavy cavalry
Light armed Infantry
Light cavalry
Heavy armed Infantry

Hannibal's Order of Attack.

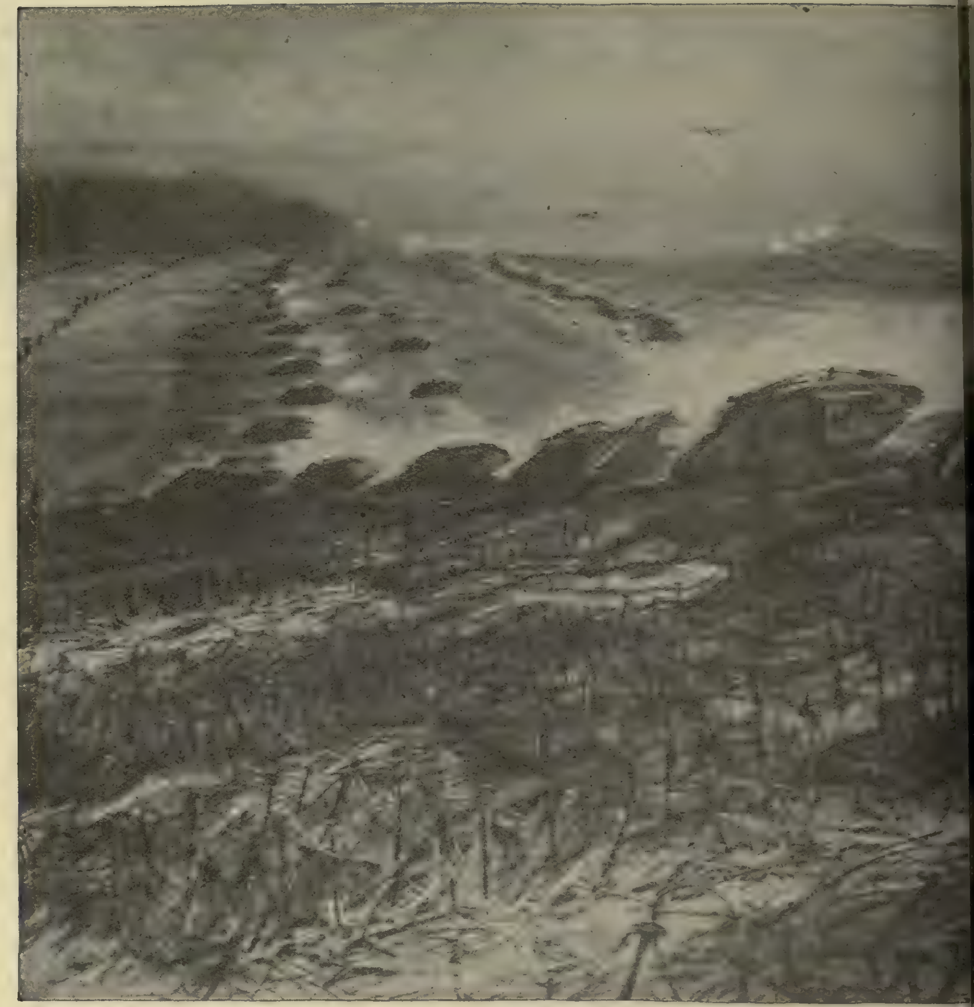
A correspondent tells us that—

> "The last spell of waiting before the moment came was nervous work. Did the Germans know anything? Were they on the alert, and would a sudden barrage crash all our hopes? . . . The day broke slowly and fine but very gray, and with an overcast sky which was evidently soon to drop rain. But the great fact was that the rain had not come before, so that the Tanks could move without slithering in the wet and slime, and the infantry could at least follow them with dry clothes, and with firm ground under them. Throughout the night there had been occasional shell-fire, and soon after 5 a.m. a sudden flurry of German guns seemed to show that the enemy was awake; but it died away, and in comparison with what one has heard all day and night for many weeks past in Flanders it was almost uncannily quiet.
>
> "Now and again, close at hand or farther away, there would be the flash and roar of a single gun, followed by the hurtling of the shell in the sky. Somewhere on the left a solitary machine gun chattered angrily at irregular intervals. But it was hard to believe that just before us a great battle was about to begin. We have every reason to believe that the Germans had no idea that it was."

The order of battle, as far as we have been permitted to learn, was somewhat as follows:—Upon the right troops from the eastern counties; next to them English rifle and other regiments; then Highland regiments; in the centre Territorials from the West Riding of Yorkshire, and on their left Ulstermen. The great Tank attack was to be made from the east of Gonnelieu to the Canal du Nord near Havrincourt. During the night his Majesty's land ships crawled up as near as possible to the enemy's wire, and these awaited the signal to advance. At six in the morning—

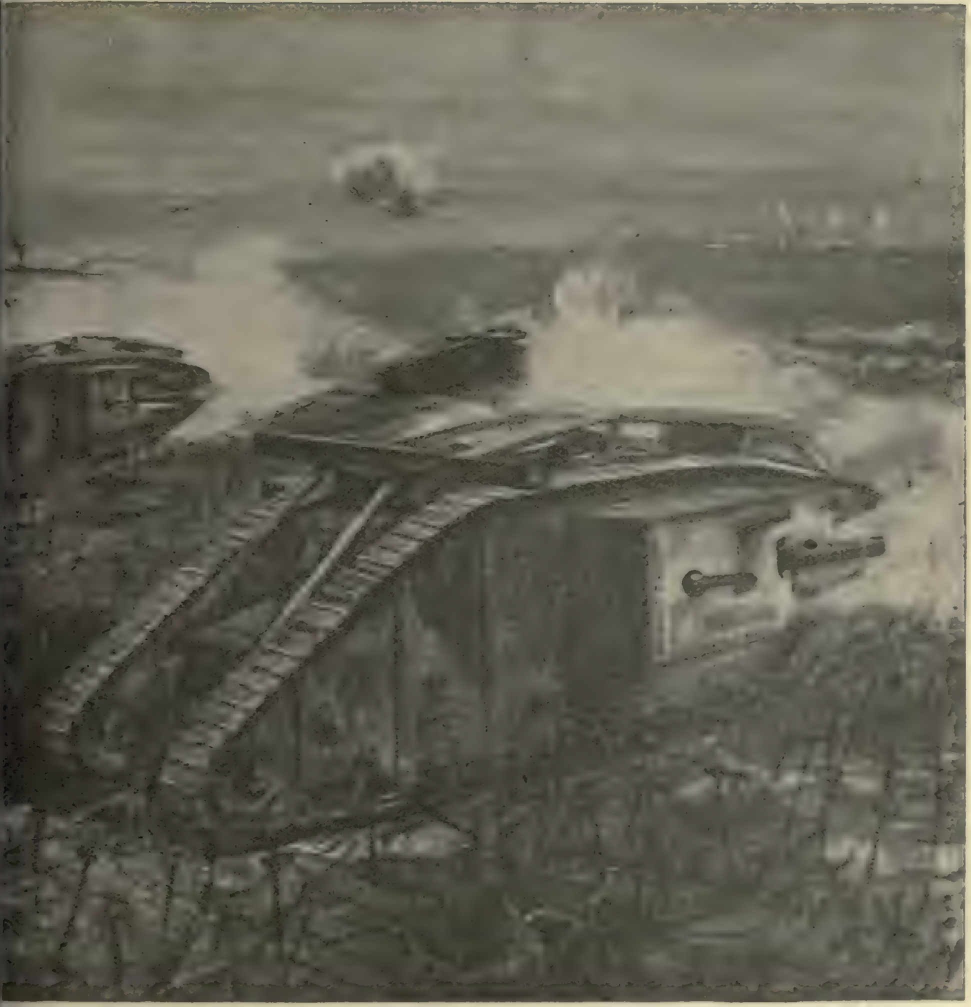
> "A great gun spoke, breaking into a moment of silence all alone. Far from the right came a roar and a flicker, and then, link by link, the whole line before us broke into a blaze. The air was filled with sudden tumult, with the crash and shock of guns and the hurrying of shells above. Ahead, and as far as the eye could see on either side, the gray half-light was aflame with the flash of guns, shell-bursts, signal rockets, and the great fountains of golden sparks which unfold smoke barrages as they fall. Through it all ran the quick, impatient chatter of machine guns."

The firing thus described was meant to drown the noise of the Tanks, now on the move. They were led by their commanding officer, who flew his admiral's flag at the peak of his Tank. In the dim light only those who took part in the attack could see what was happening. Men who accompanied the Tanks said that they rolled forward as if on parade. They



The Advance of the Tanks on November 20t

This picture, which is based upon information supplied by eye-witnesses, shows the great advan
wood of Havrincourt; away to the right is seen the village of Flesquières. In general outline the Tan
very different. You observe that the huge beasts are going forward in line towards the Hindenburg Li
heavily armed, and their business is to attack pill-boxes and machine-gun batteries. The *Female Ta*
and the Scheldt Canal is not unlike the grass uplands of South England, and therefore was very suita
While they are crushing the wire entanglements beneath them, they are blazing away at the nearest targ
and that henceforth they will play a large part in warfare. General Sir William Robertson, addressi
to stick it out to the last, and go on with your Tanks. . . . Go on with your Tanks, for every bolt
contrivances may help us, and none better than Tanks."



mashing through the Belts of Wire. *[By permission of The Sphere.*

f the Tanks on the morning of November 20, 1917. The point of view is from a slight hill near the
semble slugs: they crawled forward with the same slow determination, but in other respects they are
e *Battle Tanks* being preceded by *Female Tanks*, as here shown. The *Battle Tanks* are specially
e used to break down wire and reduce trenches. The rolling down country between the Canal du Nord
r the advance of the Tanks. You will notice that they are engaged in two operations at the same time.
ith fine effect. There is no doubt that the Tanks proved their great usefulness in the Battle of Cambrai,
ank manufacturers on March 2, 1918, encouraged his hearers with the following words: "Determine
Tank is a bolt in a Hun coffin. . . . You cannot do without the man behind the gun; but mechanical

had carefully rehearsed the part which they were to play, and now they crashed through the thickets of standing wire almost without an effort. In five minutes they had driven broad lanes through the wire, and were bearing down on the trenches with all guns going. Behind them came the infantry, "mopping up" as they advanced. The Germans were now sending up red rockets, signals of distress, calling piteously for help from their guns. In the early part of the day the enemy's artillery made but little response.

The Tanks were soon astride of the advanced trenches, and their guns were reaping a heavy harvest of casualties. Slowly but surely they pressed on to the main line. Our infantry, following in their wake, reported that they found many German dead both in the advance and in the main Hindenburg trenches. Our losses were very slight during this first part of the push. It is said that out of three neighbouring battalions only five men in all were wounded. Most of the surviving Germans surrendered as soon as the infantry came along, and scores were trapped in their dug-outs. All the prisoners declared that they had been completely surprised. No doubt we had to thank our airmen for the enemy's ignorance of our intentions. For weeks before the attack they had prevented German airmen from flying over our lines, and on the day of the battle there were practically no enemy machines up, while ours simply swarmed. A correspondent tells us that he saw one hundred British aeroplanes within one hundred and fifty feet of the ground helping the Tanks to reduce the trenches.

As soon as the Tanks had broken down the wide belts of standing wire, the infantry swarmed through the gaps and made for their objectives. They were followed by cavalry. The main Hindenburg Line was now in the rear, and our men were engaged in open fighting. Turn to the bird's-eye view on page 322, and notice the points which were reached before the end of the day. On the right we captured Bonavis Ridge and the wood of Lateau, overlooking the Scheldt Canal. Below the wood two national highways, the one from Paris, the other from Châlons, unite and proceed as one road towards Lille. From the ridge the Eastern Counties troops, who carried it, could easily see Cambrai, and beyond the city the Scheldt, winding for many a mile over the plain.

To the left of Lateau Wood you notice a spur above the village of La Vacquerie. This commanding point was seized by English rifle regiments and light infantry. Still farther to the left English county troops advanced along a ravine, carrying the railway from Havrincourt to Marcoing, and occupied Couillet Wood. They also descended from Highland Ridge, and carried Ribécourt, in the hollow.

The 51st (Highland) Division attacked Flesquières, where the Tanks met with a very stubborn resistance. The village was strongly garrisoned, and on the eastern side of the place several batteries of field guns and 5.9's lay screened in pits. After the first shock the garrison rallied and got their machine guns to work. The Tanks made light of these weapons; but when the big guns opened fire they suffered heavily. Several of them were knocked out by 3-inch shells at a point-blank range of 150 yards, and the situation was critical. The Highlanders, however, charged the pits with their bayonets, and killed the crews, who fought desperately round their guns. Brave as they were, the German artillerymen were no match for our men, and one by one they fell by the limbers of their batteries. Four of the field guns and three 5.9's were captured. Flesquières, however, still held out. The surviving Tanks sat down on its eastern side, and poured a steady fire into it. Early next day it passed into our hands.

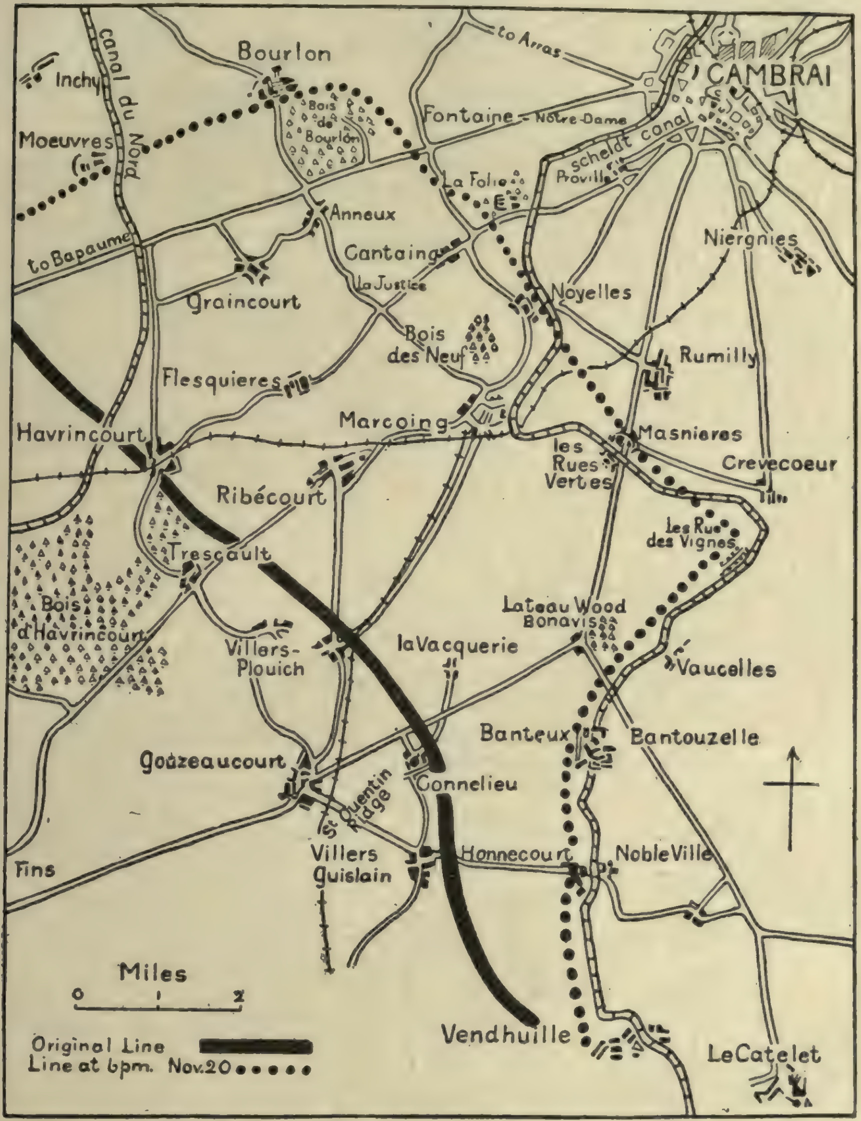
West Riding Territorials were in Havrincourt village between eight and nine in the morning. The enemy attempted to rally at this point, but could not stand against the doughty Yorkshiremen. Passing through Havrincourt, they went right forward to Anneux, which you see under the shoulder of Bourlon Hill. Meanwhile English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh battalions had seized the country town of Marcoing, and had captured the important crossings of the Scheldt Canal at Masnières. The latter place is full of underground caverns, linked together by passages, and in these the Germans had installed themselves with machine guns. Before the village was securely held our men had to wage many a fierce fight underground.

Now we must learn what the Ulstermen were doing. Their sphere of operations lay along the Canal du Nord, from the left of the Yorkshiremen to the Bapaume-Cambrai road; they thus covered the left flank of the main attack. Probably they had the hardest task of the day. They had no Tanks to help them, and had to make a frontal attack upon the enemy's line, which lay on the west side of the canal. With the utmost gallantry they bombed their way through the wire, and, reaching the trenches, pushed along them, practically without stopping, for 2,000 yards. There was more or less stubborn fighting all the way. Almost at the outset they came up against a formidable obstacle in the shape of a big spoil bank composed of material dug out of the canal. It was some sixty feet high, and had been honeycombed with dug-outs and machine-gun emplacements. The Ulstermen rushed it with bombs, and managed to get their Lewis gun up the uneven slopes so quickly that they were able to fire into the retreating enemy and sweep the trench northwards. They continued to work their way towards the north, and meanwhile the engineers performed wonderful feats in bridging the canal and enabling the heroic Irishmen to get across and carry the support trenches on the other side. By nightfall they had cleared the whole trench system up to Mœuvres.

The dotted line on the map shows our position at the close of Tuesday. We had completely surprised the enemy, and had thrust a great wedge into his positions. For seven miles the Hindenburg Line had been broken through, and in some places the third line of the German defences had been reached. Meanwhile the enemy was straining every nerve to bring up troops to resist our attack. All the roads and railways leading to Cambrai were thronged, and south of Bourlon Hill gangs of labourers were working furiously to create new positions. Towards evening very heavy rain began to fall, and continued all night. This hampered our movements, and especially hindered the mounted men who had followed the infantry and were busy clearing up the ground which had been won.

The Tanks had done their work splendidly. Twelve of them went into Marcoing, each with an objective to take and hold, and it is believed that every one of the twelve reached its post. At the bridge at Masnières one Tank crashed through the woodwork and found a resting-place in the water. When one of the monsters entered Ribécourt the Germans fled, leaving behind them their breakfasts, which the crew of the Tank promptly ate.

Some of the Tanks engaged were veterans of many fights, but others went into action for the first time. One of these recruits went alone into a village, and held it until the cavalry


Bourlon
canal du Nord
Inchy
Moeuvres
Bois de Bourlon
to Arras
CAMBRAI
Fontaine - Notre-Dame
scheldt canal
Proville
La Folie
E
Anneux
to Bapaume
Cantaing
La Justice
Niergnies
Graincourt
Noyelles
Bois des Neuf
Rumilly
Flesquieres
Marcoing
Havrincourt
Masnieres
les Rues Vertes
Crevecoeur
Ribécourt
Les Rues des Vignes
Trescault
Bois d'Havrincourt
Lateau Wood
Bonavis
Villers-Plouich
laVacquerie
Vaucelles
Banteux
Bantouzelle
Gouzeaucourt
Gonnelieu
St Quentin Ridge
Villers Guislain
Honnecourt
Noble Ville
Fins
Miles
0
1
2
Vendhuille
LeCatelet
Original Line
Line at 6pm. Nov.20

Map illustrating our Advance on November 20, 1917.

came up. Some of the Tanks broke down; but even when incapable of proceeding, played a useful part as strong points. Their steel-clad sides made them better redoubts than the German pill-boxes. As you already know, some of the Tanks were knocked out by artillery fire at point-blank range. Their casualties, however, were not heavy. Nearly three-fourths of the seriously wounded were officers who went outside to point the way, and thus offered themselves as good targets to the enemy snipers.

You already know that cavalry played a large part in the battle. All Tuesday they poured in a steady stream through the gaps torn by the Tanks and the following infantry. A correspondent who saw them trotting happily over the hills, the rain dripping from their metal hats, their horses wet and glistening, says they made the finest picture that he had seen in this war. For well-nigh forty months our mounted men had longed for the chance to bestride their good steeds and gallop at the charge across firm, level ground. The opportunity had arrived at last.

> "From noon onwards the cavalry was in action among the hills and valleys that skirt the Cambrai plain, rounding up fugitives, clearing villages, and steadily widening the salient. They rode down rearguard columns and charged German batteries. I heard to-day of one detachment of horsemen that galloped against two field batteries, swinging their sabres, and cutting down the gun crews before they could escape. . . . Although heavy and continuous rain has churned the roads into slippery mud, the horses still have a fairly decent footing, and the untrodden open country between the captured villages gives ample room for movement. It was the cavalrymen's day. Their dream had come true."

Mr. Philip Gibbs tells us that—

> "Behind our lines our army was filled with enthusiasm because of our wonderful surprise to the enemy in his strongest lines. It was this effect of surprise which pleased our men most. 'This is the sort of war we like,' they said. 'We have caught old Fritz bending for once.' After our smash through the Hindenburg lines the enemy hurried up reinforcements from all the camps near Cambrai; but they were so hard pressed in the meantime that they actually cleared out a camp of cripples and convalescents, and hurled them into the fighting lines. It was a brutal and stupid proceeding. The men were too ill to fight. One of them, who lay about among the prisoners, was found to be in the last stages of consumption, and had to be taken by us to an isolation hospital. There is no doubt that the enemy is now rushing up all available troops to make a stand round Cambrai. To be fair to his men—and to ours, because it was not a walk-over for them after the first surprise—the troops holding the woods and villages behind the Hindenburg Line fought hard and well, and tried to beat our men back and hold them off by many counter-attacks. Marcoing was entered by English troops without great opposition; but there was severe fighting beyond that village and in Neuf Wood, which was

General the Hon. Sir Julian Byng.

(*Canadian War Record.*)

attacked at the bayonet point, and taken after heavy 'scrapping' by infantry who were in action for the first time.

"A heavy counter-attack developed from the north-east of Masnières. The German infantry advanced in massed formation shoulder to shoulder, as in the old days of 1914, and were mown down by our gun-fire. Another attack of the same kind was attempted after midday from the Marcoing side; but the men dropped into the trenches on their way, and never came out again. One post held by Lancashire Fusiliers changed hands seven times. There was fierce street fighting, and the place had to be fought for from house to house and from cellar to cellar. The enemy defended every wall by machine-gun and rifle fire, and sniped our men from the roofs and trees.

"The enemy was driven across the canal by men of the Middlesex Regiment and the Royal Fusiliers. There were very lively skirmishes about Crèvecœur, and here a little body of the Northumberland Yeomanry came up against some German guns in action. They were about to charge when they saw that there was a belt of uncut wire between them and the enemy's battery. It was impossible to lead horses against this obstacle, so they dismounted, worked round the wire, and captured the guns.

"Among the more interesting prisoners taken was a regimental commander, with two of his battalion commanders. They were all caught in the regimental headquarters, and the commander came out, accompanied by two servants, and very spick and span in everything except temper. That was dreadfully ruffled. His manners were bad, and the language that he used, especially when he saw our cavalry going up, was shocking."

So far did we penetrate into the enemy's territory that we captured villages full of civilians. Some four hundred residents of Masnières and nearly one thousand of another village were released from the German thrall. Many of the poor people cried with joy when our troops appeared. The fact that the villages were not cleared of their inhabitants shows plainly that the enemy did not expect an attack.

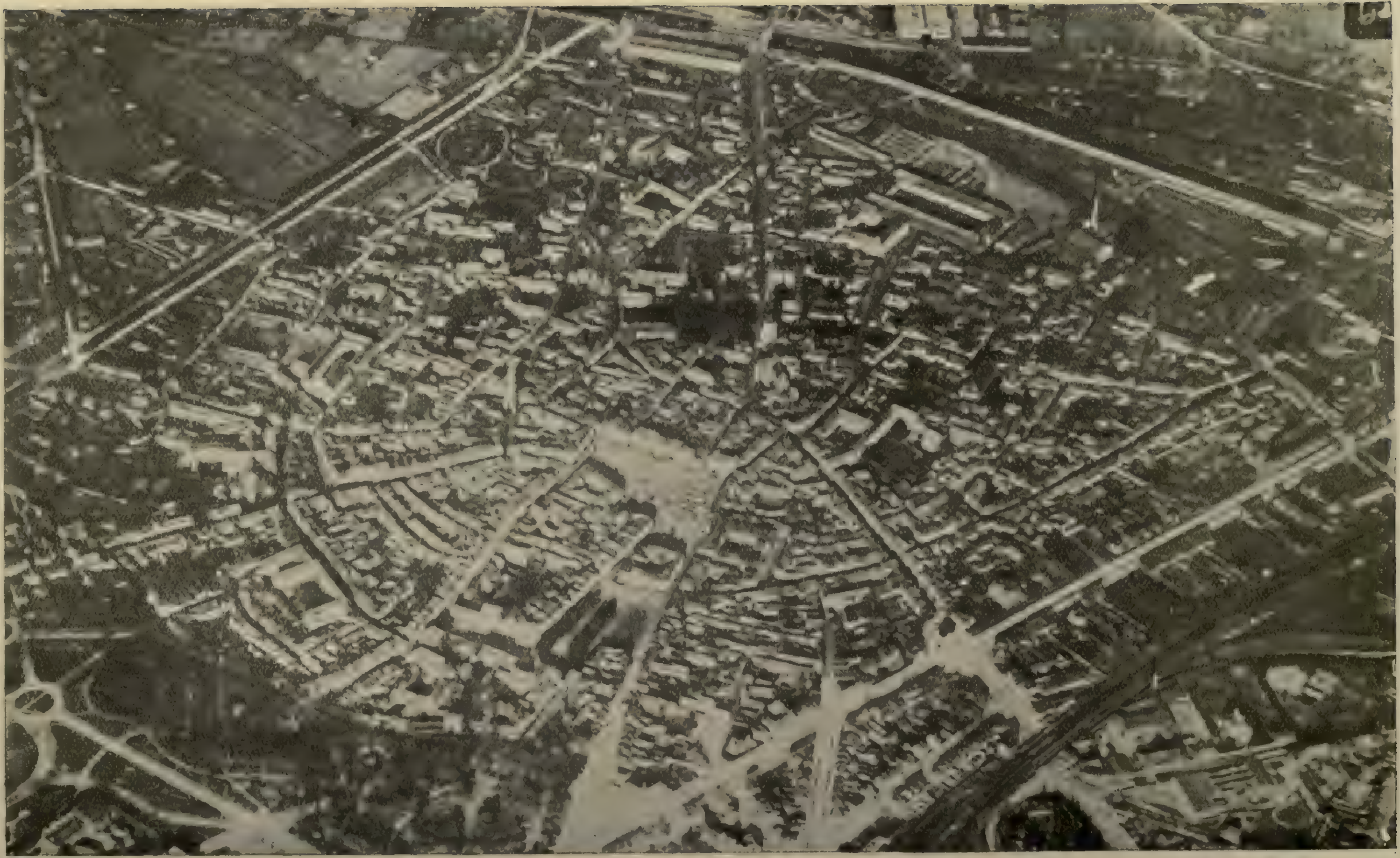
Those poor people were shepherded through our lines, and made a pathetic procession as they streamed along the roads with their wheelbarrows and perambulators loaded with household goods. The civilians who were rescued in Cantaing said that the first hint they had of our attack was the cracking of rifles and the approach of a Tank. Almost immediately afterwards our cavalry appeared, and then the Germans began to shell the place. They took refuge in their cellars, and did not leave them until the village was occupied by our infantry. About an hour after midnight they took our men's advice and left the place.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI.

SOME of the poor folks rescued from the captured villages had tragic stories to tell. One man, of military age, had hidden himself in his own house for three years, and had not been discovered, though German officers had been billeted there all the time. He was watched over by his heroic wife, who supplied him daily with a portion of her own food. The man and his wife were fully aware that discovery meant death to both of them, and they must have gone through agonies every time the house was searched. Happily the man was never discovered. When released he was found to be little more than a skeleton—terribly weak from lack of exercise, and colourless from long confinement in the dark. He owed his life to the courage and self-sacrifice of his noble wife.

Another man who was released was the mayor of Masnières, an upright, sterling man, who told his rescuers that though the Germans were suffering badly, their Italian successes had given them new hope, and that they once more talked loudly of capturing Paris. He also said that the officers were always telling their men that the real heroes were the people at home, and that it was their duty to "stick it out," because their relatives were so nobly playing their part in Germany. The civilians in the villages had only been kept alive by the food supplied by the American Relief Committee, and, later, by those of the Spanish and Dutch. The punishment for concealing food was twenty-one days' imprisonment, and there were few of the inhabitants who at one time or another had not been sent to prison for hiding a fowl or some flour. The young German officers in the villages behaved very badly. They were very



A German Airman's Photograph of Cambrai. [*Photo supplied by Topical Press.*

This photograph, which was taken from a height of 2,000 feet, fell into British hands in the course of the battle.

arrogant, and they stole everything of value on which they could lay their hands.

* * * * * * *

The news of our rapid and successful advance was received at home with enthusiasm. Everywhere men thought that the turn of the tide had come, and that at last what the Prime Minister had called "the impenetrable wall" in the West had been broken down. Unhappily the nation attached too much importance to this initial success, and thus planted the seeds of its later disappointment. Joy bells rang out from many steeples, and the newspapers hailed the achievement as a great victory. What actually had we done? We had caught the Germans napping, and by means of a surprise attack had driven into the enemy's lines a deep salient, with its apex on the skirts of Cambrai. We had inflicted very heavy losses on the Germans in dead, wounded, prisoners, and guns.

Our hopes were high, and during Wednesday's fighting we made further headway, though at a much slower rate than on Tuesday. Had we advanced as rapidly as on the previous day we should have been in Cambrai by Wednesday evening. By this time, however, the Germans had recovered from their surprise, and had rallied on the high ground astride of the Scheldt Canal between the Bapaume-Cambrai road and the St. Quentin-Cambrai road. As it was, we slightly extended the edges of the wedge which we had driven in.

Near to the canal in front of Crèvecœur we carried two lines of trenches and a portion of the third line of the Hindenburg system. We also captured the village of Noyelles, which is not shown on our bird's-eye view; it stands more than two thousand yards in front of Marcoing, and is only a couple of miles from the outskirts of Cambrai. Noyelles was seized by Lancashire troops at two o'clock on Wednesday. Before our men had been long in the place they saw Germans dribbling down the slope from the spinneys and other slight cover on the ridge to the north of them. The counter-attack was being made by Prussian Guards, who were very skilfully handled, and advanced with great determination. They forced their way into the village, and for two hours the battle raged amongst the houses. One post changed hands seven times in the course of two hours. There were many hand-to-hand fights, in which bayonets, fists, and broken bricks were used. Our men behaved magnificently, and, with the help of reinforcements, completely overcame the Guards.

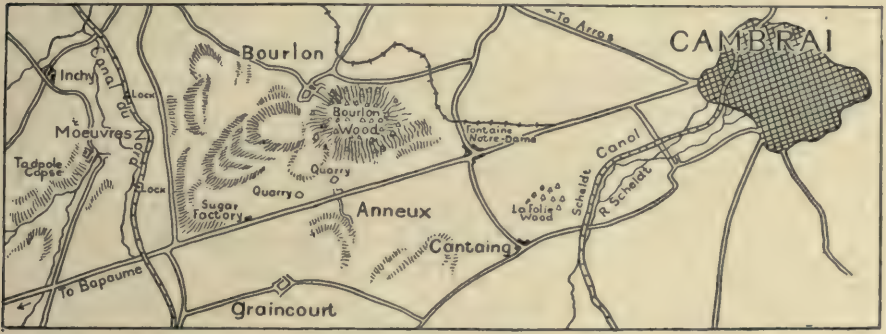
When the last of them had bolted eastward across the canal the Lancashire lads shook hands. Their losses were not light, but they had saved the village. They were specially delighted at having met a crack Prussian regiment. "At first," said an officer, "we were up against rabbits who were all for going into the first hole; but when we found the Guards had been thrown in, we were very pleased, for they fight well, and it is a pleasure to knock them out."

The Scots pushing forward from Flesquières captured Containg, along with 500 prisoners; and continuing their advance, reached La Folie Wood, on the bank of the Scheldt Canal. Meanwhile West Riding troops struck the Bapaume-Cambrai road beyond Anneux, just south of Bourlon Wood. By evening Fontaine, at the far end of Bourlon Hill, was occupied, but could not be held. The salient was too sharp at this point, and on Thursday morning a strong counter-attack drove us out. La Folie Wood was also recaptured.

At nine on Wednesday morning Ulstermen from Derry and Belfast pushed on from their halting-place of the previous night and approached Mœuvres, toward which they had bombed their way from the Bapaume-Cambrai road. The village was enclosed by a formidable belt of wire, and by some of the strongest trenches in the whole Hindenburg system. A broad double line of trenches ran along the southern end of the village, and an equally strong support line consisting of a solid block of concreted pits crossed the northern end, the whole of the defences covering a mile square. On the right was the canal. Through this maze of wire and trenches the Ulstermen had to fight their way. The garrison stubbornly resisted, and bayonet fights were common. Nevertheless the Irishmen pushed along the trenches and up the streets of the village, only to find themselves faced by barricades or strong points, from which machine guns played upon them. Not till half-past one in the afternoon was the place finally cleared.

Mœuvres was important to the Germans as an outpost of Bourlon Hill. Unless it could be recaptured, the way would be opened for an assault on the high wooded ground that commands Cambrai. A counter-attack on Mœuvres was at once ordered. Storm troops were seen preparing to cross the locks of the canal. The Irishmen on its western bank were forced to fall back slightly, but their comrades in and about Mœuvres stood fast. The attack was beaten off, and then the German guns got to work and shelled the Irishmen all the evening and during the night. The ordeal was heavy, but they held on. At nine on Thursday morning the Germans began their attack on Mœuvres from the north and north-east. By two o'clock they were midway between Bourlon Wood and Inchy. At half-past five they swept against Mœuvres, and the weary defenders were forced to give way. They only retired a little to the south, where they held their ground.

On Thursday we busied ourselves in strengthening the line which we had won, and the Germans continued to pour men into the threatened region. On Friday the struggle for Bourlon Hill began. I want you to pay particular attention to this feature. It rises, as you see on the bird's-eye view, between Mœuvres and Cambrai, and is a sort of pear-shaped hump rather less than five miles long, and at its highest point about a hundred feet above the surrounding level. It rises regularly to its summit, which is more than a mile long, but only a quarter of a mile across. On its flanks are four villages—Bourlon on the north side, Mœuvres on the west, Anneux on the south beyond the Bapaume-Cambrai road, and Fontaine Notre Dame, astride of the same road, and only two miles from the suburbs of Cambrai. Overlapping the greater part of the summit, and clothing much of the northern, southern, and eastern sides, is Bourlon Wood, consisting of oak and ash, and covering about a square mile.


To Arras
CAMBRAI
Bourlon
Inchy
Canal du Nord
Lock
Bourlon Wood
Moeuvres
Fontaine Notre-Dame
Canal
Tadpole Copse
Quarry
Lock
Quarry
Sugar Factory
Anneux
La Folie Wood
Schelde
R. Scheldt
Cantaing
To Bapaume
Graincourt

Map of Bourlon Wood.

The hill which I have just described was the key to Cambrai. If we could capture it, we should be in possession of a commanding point only 6,000 yards from the main railway to Lille and Valenciennes. Once our big guns were installed on the hill we could destroy the railway, and thus cut off Cambrai from its main communications with Belgium and Germany. The city would have to be abandoned, and the line of defence north and south for a considerable distance would be in dire danger. The Germans knew that at all costs Bourlon Hill must be held.

On Friday morning the Tanks again came into play. They rolled slowly and serenely past Graincourt and Anneux, and entered Bourlon Wood. They also bore down on Fontaine Notre Dame. The Germans in their lookouts among the trees could see the Tanks crawling forward, keeping station like a fleet at sea, sliding over the German trenches, and carrying all before them. They entered Fontaine without a pause. Close behind them came Scotsmen, who found Germans with machine guns on every roof top, in every cottage, and behind every ruined wall. A desperate resistance was made, and the Scots could not get beyond the edge of the village. Fresh enemy troops were thrown into it, and early in the afternoon dense waves of German infantry made a determined attack on La Folie Wood, but were driven off.

While the Scots were thus engaged, other British troops were making steady progress in Bourlon Wood. Tanks drove broad lanes amidst the trees, and climbed to the crest, followed by infantry, who were heavily sniped and machine-gunned. Nevertheless they pushed steadily upward.

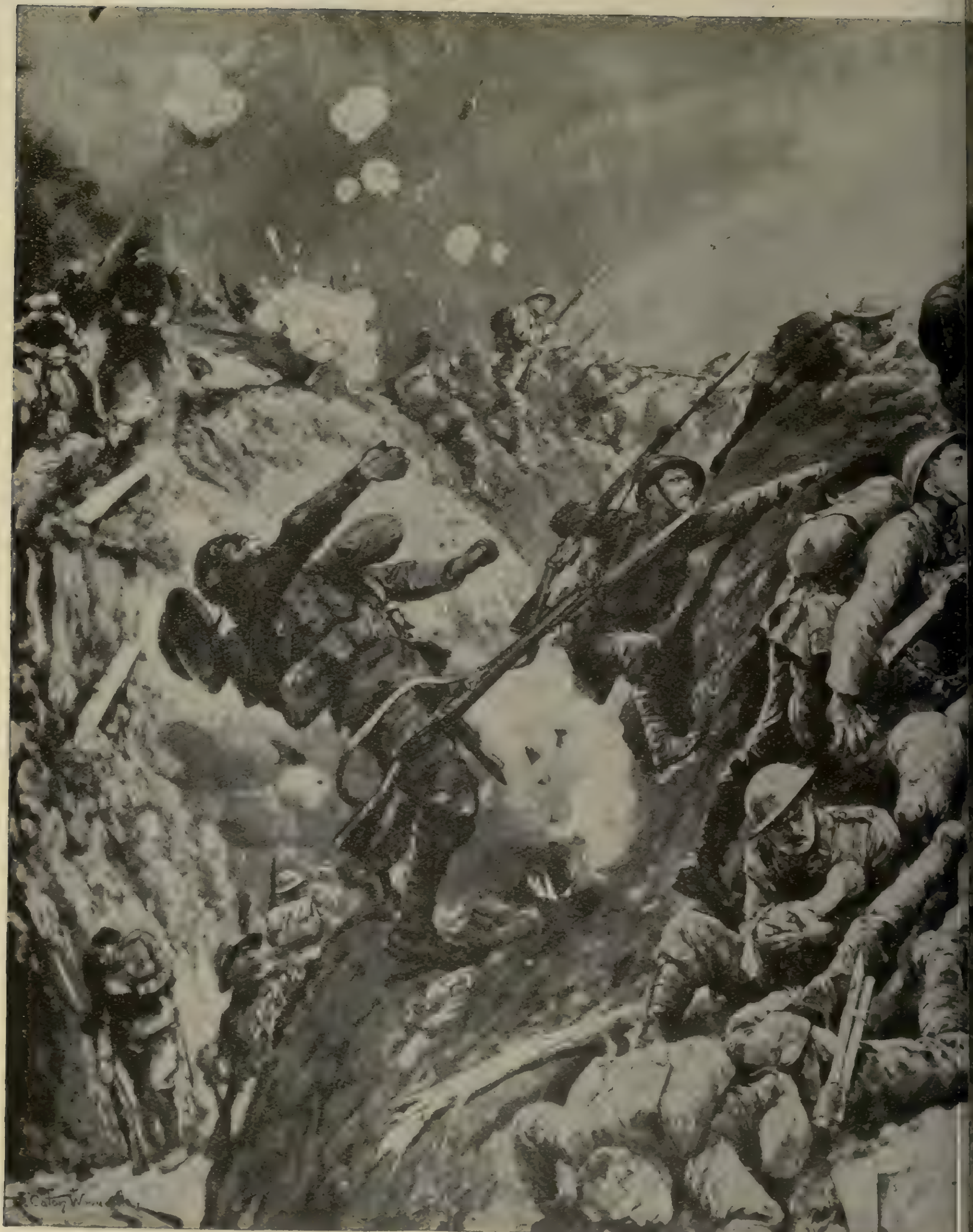
The Tanks got through the greater part of the wood without serious opposition; but when they descended the reverse face leading to Bourlon village, they suddenly came upon a trench filled with German infantry and machine guns. It is said that the machine guns were firing armour-piercing bullets. The Tanks were so fiercely assailed that they were forced to call a halt. At this moment reinforcements appeared from the sky! Our airmen swooped down like angry hawks upon the entrenched enemy, and fought them at a height of only thirty or forty feet. The Germans could stand against the Tanks; but their courage oozed out when the machine guns of the aeroplanes opened fire, and they bolted headlong for the village, in the cellars of which they sought refuge. Then the Tanks completed their tour of the wood, and the troops following them reached the lower northern face, where they dug in. Meanwhile other detachments were moving up the western slopes towards the village, and before long our guns were shelling it.

By midday on Saturday, 24th November, we held nearly all Bourlon Wood and the open country to the south-east up to the Scheldt Canal at La Folie Wood, also the open ground between the southern end of Bourlon village and the Nord Canal. We were also in possession of the lower edge of Mœuvres, and portions of the Hindenburg main front and support trench systems between that village and Inchy.

Then began a series of the most persistent counter-attacks. For the rest of the day the enemy flung his troops against us again and again, and strove to re-establish himself in the wood, and to retain the village. "It was a day of fierce pressure from the north, north-east, and north-west on our line between the two canals, and from Inchy upon Mœuvres. Shock was met with counter-shock. When the sun sank below a wonderful blood-red western sky at the close of this day of desperate battle, we again held nearly all Bourlon Wood, and were bombing out the pocketed garrison of the village. We held again a part of the vanishing ruins of Mœuvres, and the battle-ground between them was strewn with dead and dying men.

"From dawn until a chill night wind swept the slopes of Artois the guns never paused, the waves of German infantry hardly slackened their restless movement forward. They advanced in compact groups into the fiery furnace created by our guns, and, caught by our shell, were blown hither and thither like the brown leaves drifting down from the wood. . . . The counter-attacks came early and often. Still more divisions were hurried to the gaping Hindenburg Line."

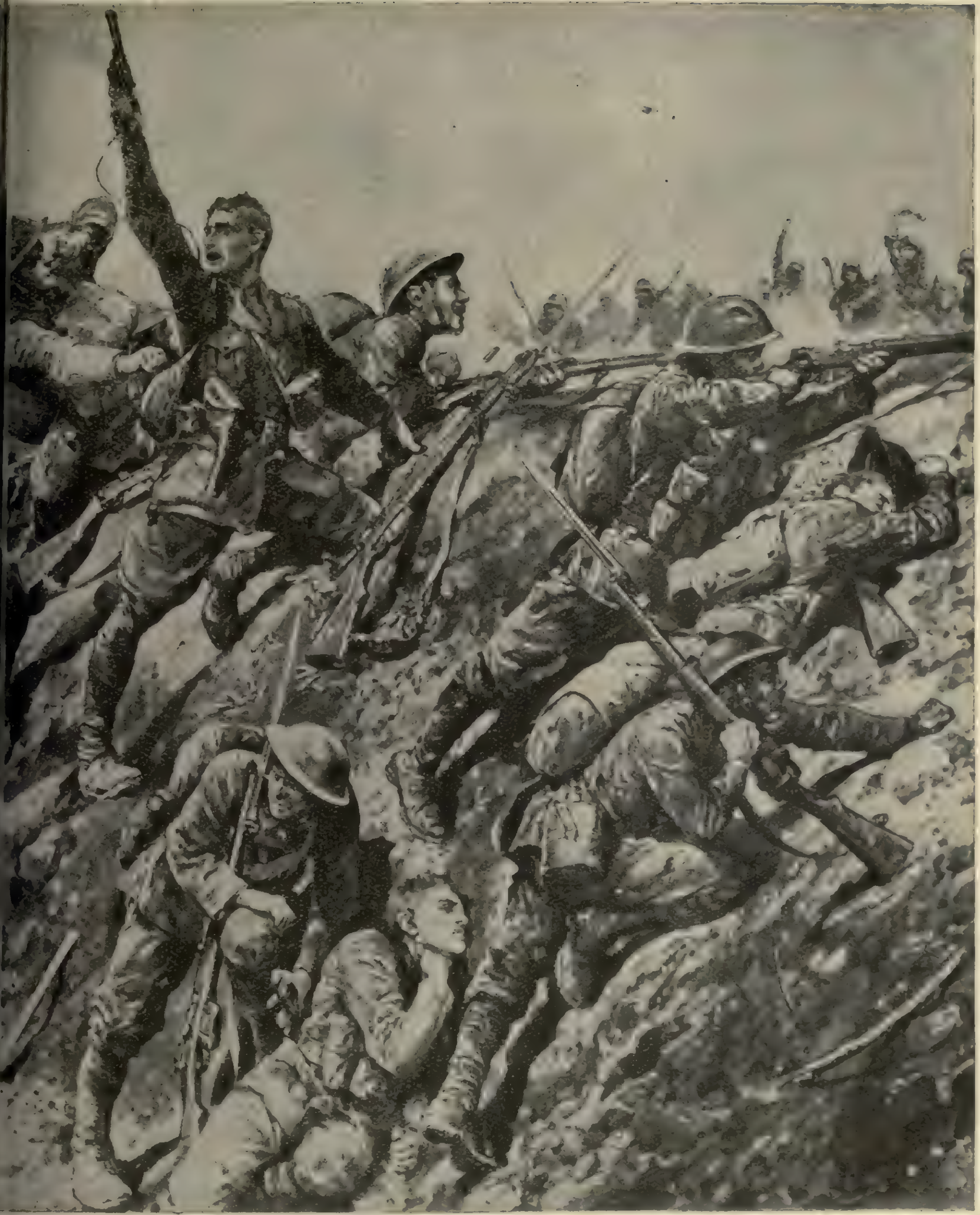
So the struggle continued with continual loss and recovery. Nevertheless, on 29th November our line ran from Banteux on the right, through Lateau Wood and Masnières, along the outskirts of Fontaine, and thence along the northern slopes of Bourlon Wood, past Mœuvres, to the position from which we started, just south of Quéant. The Hindenburg system had been left miles behind, but there were still strongly-fortified



Essex Men who resolved to fight to the Dea

(*From the picture by R. Caton Woodville.*

During the glorious stand made by our men on the northern face of the Cambrai sa
will read an account of the superb stand of a company of the 13th Essex Regiment, 2nd Divisi
Germans made an attack in force, and cut off the company. With wonderful heroism the Essex
was called, and it was determined to fight on to the last, and to die rather than surrender. Two run
man of them had fallen. "They fought Britain's Thermopylæ, and their glorious heroism must n



One of the most heroic episodes of the war.

permission of The Illustrated London News.)

(November 30th) many magnificent deeds of heroism were performed. On pages 355–356 you
This company was holding a trench on the west side of the Canal du Nord. In the afternoon the
clung to their position. About four o'clock they knew that they could not be rescued. A council of war
were sent back to headquarters with the information. Then they continued the struggle until every
be forgotten."

villages and other positions in the hands of the enemy. These barred our way, and meanwhile the Germans were bringing up division after division with which they hoped to win back their losses. By this time we had captured 10,500 prisoners and 142 guns, and had created a salient about eight miles in breadth and five miles deep. This salient, however, had its disadvantages. It could be swept by enemy artillery from side to side, and our men were out in the open country, with no deep trenches to shelter them. Further, we had concentrated most of our forces in the north-west part of the salient, and the south-east flank was not strongly held.

On 29th November General der Marwitz, the German commander in this region, published the following order :—

" SOLDIERS OF THE SECOND ARMY.

" The English, by throwing into the fight countless Tanks on 20th November, gained a victory near Cambrai. Their intention was to break through ; but they did not succeed in doing so, thanks to the brilliant resistance of the troops who were put into line to check their advance. We are now going to turn their undeveloped victory into a defeat by an encircling counter-attack. The Fatherland is watching you, and expects every man to do his duty."

* * * * * * *

November 30, 1917, will for ever be marked as a red-letter day in the calendar of the British army. On that day our troops in the neighbourhood of Bourlon Wood and Mœuvres gloriously bore the brunt of a long series of terrible counter-attacks, and at nightfall had maintained all their lines save a few advanced positions which were afterwards regained. The story of their determined resistance reminds us of that dark, dread day—October 31, 1914—when the men of the old army, the finest infantry in the world, were assailed by overwhelming numbers of the enemy in the full flush of his mighty strength. You will remember that on that day the Germans broke through our defences, and seemed to be on the high-road to victory ; but in the very nick of time our thin line of steel and valour thrust them back and saved the situation. Before you reach the end of this chapter you will be fully assured that the heroic spirit displayed by our incomparable regular army in front of Ypres inspired the gallant civilians who held their own against terrible odds on the northern face of the Cambrai salient.

Happily I am able to tell you the story of November 30, 1917, in somewhat full detail. On the morning of that day the 47th (London) Territorial Division, the 2nd Division, and the right brigade of the 56th (London) Territorial Division were holding the front of about five miles, extending from the eastern edge of Bourlon Wood to Tadpole Copse, a position in the Hindenburg Line to the west of Mœuvres. From Tadpole Copse across No Man's Land to our old front line, the left brigade of the 56th Division formed a defensive flank.

The right brigade of the 56th had taken part in the grand assault of 20th November, and since that date had captured and held about a mile of the Hindenburg Line west of Mœuvres and including Tadpole Copse. Ever since the 20th there had been almost constant fighting on this front, and already the division had been very severely tested.

On the night of 26th–27th November the 2nd Division relieved the troops who had captured the portion of our front lying between Bourlon Wood and Mœuvres, and had been engaged in holding it ever since. This division had only just completed a special course of training, and it soon showed that it had learned its lessons well. As soon as it took over the front it began its work of strengthening the line and straightening it out. Communications were made with the base, strong posts were constructed, wire entanglements were set up, and supplies of ammunition and stores of all sorts were brought forward. This work was done rapidly and thoroughly. Had there been any slackness or delay, it is doubtful whether the division could have weathered the storm which broke upon it during the morning of 30th November.

On the night of the 28th–29th November the 47th Division was brought from another part of the line, to take over positions in Bourlon Wood and immediately to the west of it. Only one day was available for strengthening these positions before the enemy made his thrusts. Nevertheless much was done, and batteries of machine guns were arranged the one behind the other, so as to cover the approaches to the wood.

All through the night the enemy shelled Bourlon Wood, and at about 8.45 in the morning an intense barrage began to fall on our front line of posts along the Bapaume-Cambrai road.

Telegraph and telephone lines were cut or destroyed by the bursting shells, and the two right battalions of the 2nd Division were cut off from communication with their comrades.

Soon after nine o'clock large numbers of the enemy were seen advancing over the ridge to the west of Bourlon Wood. They hoped to strike our line at the junction of the 47th Division with the 2nd Division. Our barrage, which was very fierce at this time, caught the advancing Germans, and swept many of them away ; but the rest pressed on, and forced back the left of the 47th Division. Four posts on the right of the 2nd Division were wiped out, and though the survivors succeeded in reaching shell-holes farther back and there held on, the situation was critical.

As the enemy's infantry appeared over the crest of the hill, our field artillery engaged them, and our machine guns, which were stationed in a sunken road south-west of Bourlon Wood and in the Sugar Factory on the Bapaume-Cambrai road, swept their advancing lines. Our field guns, Lewis guns, and machine guns inflicted terrible losses on the enemy, and held up his advance. After three hours' hard fighting they drove him back.

Farther west the enemy's advance broke upon that part of the 2nd Division's line which was held by a company of the 17th Battalion Royal Fusiliers at the moment when it was in the act of withdrawing from an advanced sap and trench, too much exposed to be held in the face of so powerful an attack. Folds in the ground had enabled the Germans to conceal themselves until they were close to the position. Captain W. N. Stone, who was in command of the company, was ordered to leave a rearguard in the post to cover the withdrawal of the remainder of his men. He sent back three platoons, and he and Lieutenant Benzecry decided to remain with the rearguard—a handful to stem the onset of a host. They knew that they would have to fight to the death, but they meant to sell their lives dearly. Assisted by machine guns, they held up the whole of the German attack until their comrades had put the main position into a condition of defence. By this time the rearguard had died to a man, with their faces to the foe.

Many a glorious deed was done that day, but none more glorious than that which was achieved by this heroic rearguard. The following report was made by the officer commanding the 17th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers :—

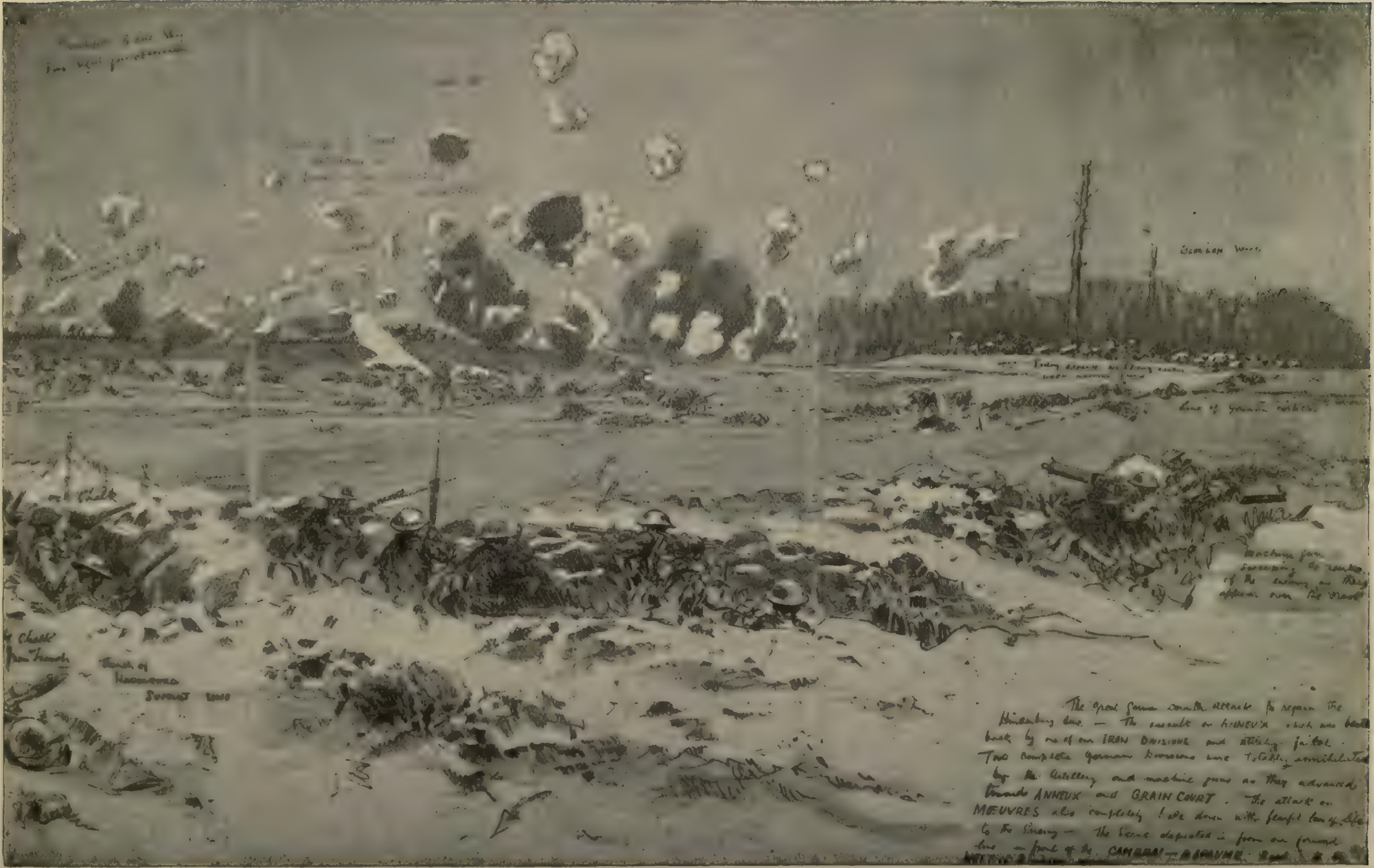
"Of the heroism of the rearguard it is difficult to speak. Captain Stone and Lieutenant Benzecry, although ordered to withdraw to the main line, elected to remain with the rearguard, which was seen fighting with bayonet, bullet, and bomb to the last. There was no survivor. Captain Stone, by the invaluable information which he gave as to the movements of the enemy prior to the attack, and by his subsequent sacrifice with the rearguard, saved the situation at the cost of his life. Lieutenant Benzecry was seen to be wounded in the head. He continued to fight until he was killed."

Thanks to the self-sacrifice of the rearguard, the Fusiliers were able to strengthen their line and get into touch with other units on either flank. Thereafter they sat tight and killed large numbers of Germans at point-blank range.

To the left of the Royal Fusiliers was the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps. Masses of the enemy moved against them; but as they topped the rise some two to three hundred yards in front of our men, they were received with such a well-directed and intense fire from rifles, Lewis guns, and machine guns that they were literally mown down, and lay in heaps. Throughout the day bodies of Germans never came any nearer our positions, though many individuals crept forward, only to be shot down by our snipers and Lewis gunners.

Before midday the enemy again attacked on the whole front of the right brigade of the 2nd Division, but was once more hurled back with great slaughter. At such close range our fire was terrible in the extreme. Early in the afternoon large masses of the enemy attacked on a front of nearly a mile west of Bourlon Wood. On the left they were once more driven off with heavy losses; but on the extreme right of the 2nd Division they captured three posts. The men who were holding these posts fell fighting to the last. When the line was restored at this point Germans lay in and around outposts in such numbers that it was impossible to find the bodies of the heroic defenders.

On the left of the 47th Division the Germans swept in between the 1/6th Battalion and the 1/15th Battalion, London Regiments, and there was a dangerous gap in our line. Then occurred an incident which reminds us of General Moussy's famous exploit at the crisis of the First Battle of Ypres (Vol. III., page 133). The officers commanding the threatened battalions hurriedly mustered runners, signallers, orderlies, and


German wood
Line of German corpses
Machine gun sweeping the ranks of the enemy as they appear over the road
Chalk
Chalk from trench
Trench of Hindenburg Support Line
The great German counter attack to regain the Hindenburg line. — The assault on ANNEUX which was beaten back by one of our IRON DIVISIONS and utterly failed. Two complete German Divisions were totally annihilated by the Artillery and machine guns as they advanced towards ANNEUX and GRAIN COURT. The attack on MŒUVRES also completely broke down with fearful loss of life to the Enemy — The scene depicted is from our forward line in front of the CAMBRAI—BAPAUME Road

"Rifles, machine-guns, and mortars have seldom if ever had such an opportunity of proving their killing power."

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

This picture illustrates the assault on Anneux, during which two German divisions were completely wiped out.

cooks belonging to the staff of their headquarters, and led them in a counter-attack, which was so successful that the breach in the line was closed.

Five posts in this part of the line were held by a company of the 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment. Never were posts more fiercely assailed. The enemy made attack after attack, and time after time came right up to the trenches, only to be mown down or driven back in disorder. Every man of that company proved himself a steadfast hero. During the long day's heavy fighting forty-five men of this company fell; nevertheless the posts were held until reinforcements arrived and the danger was past. This single company of the Berkshires claimed to have killed over five hundred of the enemy. The splendid resistance of these determined men, who knew how to use their weapons and had steeled their minds to fight to the end, was one of the finest incidents of a proud day.*

Now let us see how the 99th Brigade fared. It formed the right of the 47th Division, which was holding the eastern ridge of Bourlon Wood. For some days past the German artillery had been steadily pouring gas shells into the wood, until the thick undergrowth was poisonous with gas. Our troops had to wear their masks for many hours, and many of our men fell victims to the deadly vapour.

> "After a short 'whirlwind' bombardment our men on the right in front of Bourlon village saw enemy field guns galloped up to a slight crest immediately in front. One gun, I believe, fired three shots before it was silenced, and others were less fortunate. Then two battalions of gray infantry came out of the ruins of Bourlon village in full marching order, as though on manœuvres, and as our amazed riflemen watched these compact lines moving forward under heavy packs, some one made the remark, which afterwards passed through the division and was repeated to me at headquarters: 'They look for all the world as though they have come to stop—and so they have!'
>
> "Before the day was half spent, the only survivors of those first waves of German infantry were dribbling through the line of the 2nd Division to the prisoners' cages, dazed and panic-stricken, still wearing their kit. The field guns and howitzers, which had been planted so audaciously at point-blank ranges, lay wrecked and broken, with dead bodies lying around shattered limbers."

Later in the afternoon the enemy made two other attacks against the right brigade of the 2nd Division. In each case the oncoming Germans were beaten back with great slaughter, much of which was caused by one of our 18-pounder batteries which continuously dropped shells on the enemy infantry crowded in their trenches.

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* See illustration, pp. 344–345.

"Repeatedly the German 'group' commander sowed the fields in front of the 2nd Division with fresh troops, and as promptly our men harvested each crop with their machine guns. Their arms ached from the sheer physical effort of killing Huns. 'Rifles, machine guns, and mortars have seldom if ever had such an opportunity of proving their killing power,' said a high officer afterwards, and every man fortunate enough to be there endorsed his opinion. You may judge of the spirit of the soldiers by the fact that even when wounded they kept on fighting rather than miss such a Heaven-sent opportunity of firing at live targets which they could not miss. I was told of some wounded men of the 2nd Highland Light Infantry who were propped up by their comrades and given rifles. One of them, when approached by the stretcher-bearers, told them to go elsewhere, as he 'wouldn't give up such a rare chance of killing Huns.' The story goes that one wrathful Jock who had been shot in both legs had to be hauled away by main force. Any man in the 2nd Division will tell you that the German attack in mass—close waves of infantry pushing over No Man's Land, as they are now being trained to do—is a spectacle to gladden the eyes of British troops. Ask the Londoners who were there with the Highlanders as part of the 5th Brigade, the 17th and 24th Royal Fusiliers, or the 2nd Oxford and Bucks who kept them company, if 30th November was not one of the most satisfactory days which they have had since they took to fighting."

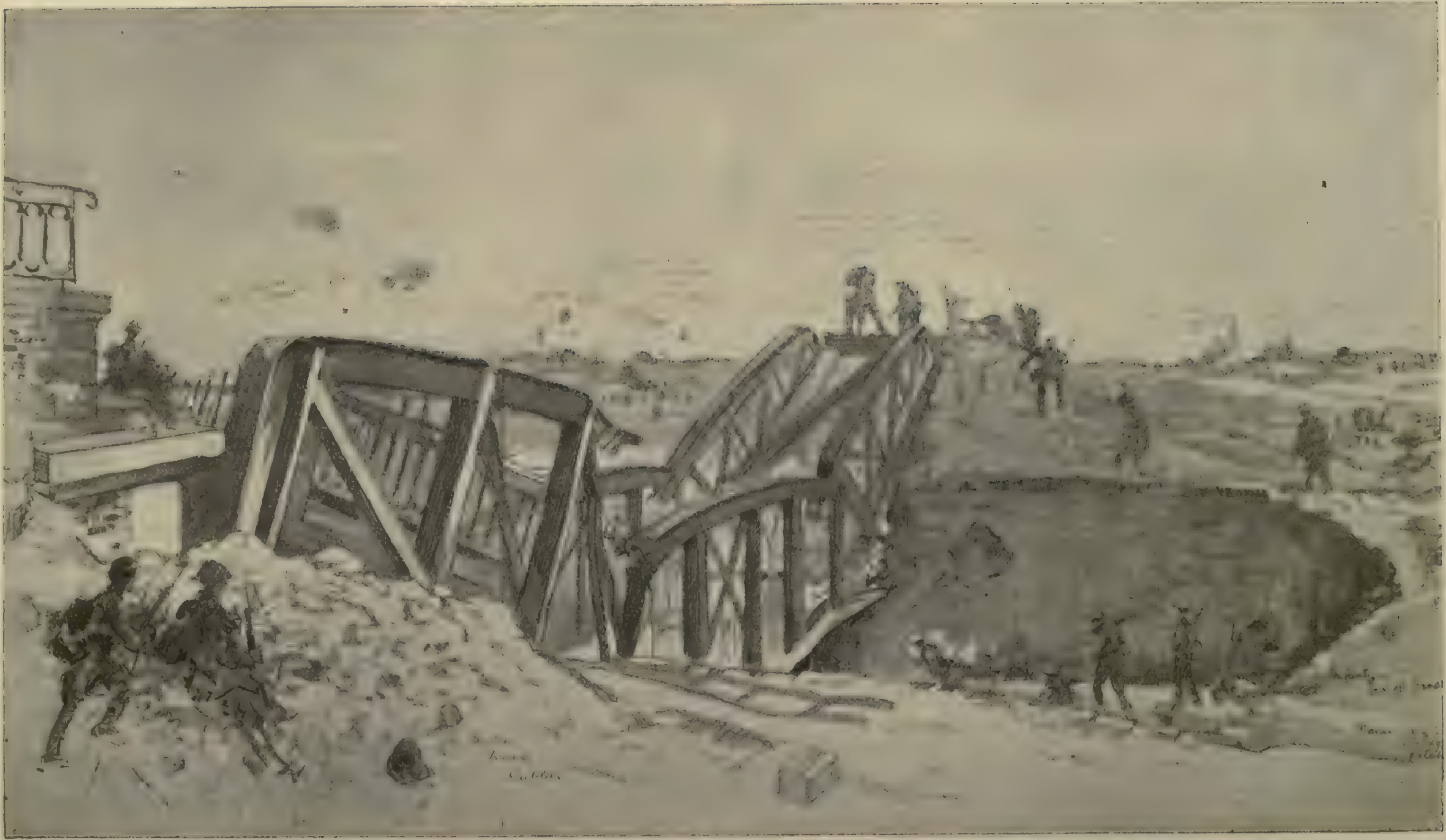
CHAPTER XXXIII.

A GLORIOUS STAND.

WE will move west to Mœuvres, and see what was happening in this hard-fought district, where the right brigade of the 56th Division was holding the line. At 9.20 a.m. the enemy was seen advancing from the north towards the Canal du Nord, and thereafter he launched attack after attack on both sides of the canal against the line of the 6th and 169th Infantry Brigades. This line was split by the canal, which was really a gigantic dry moat with steep sides and a floor of brick. German machine guns enfiladed our positions, and the bridges could not be held. Our men had to slide down one slippery fifty-foot wall, and climb up the other by means of ropes under a harassing fire. Only in this way could communication be maintained between the troops on either bank.

The Germans made constant rushes from the ruins of Mœuvres, and south of the village entered our trenches and began to make headway along them. It was then that Captain A. C. M'Ready Diarmid, of the 17th Battalion Middlesex Regiment, led a party of bombers forward through a very heavy barrage. He engaged the Germans with such success that they were driven back some five hundred yards with heavy loss in dead, wounded, and prisoners.

On the following day this hero again led a bombing attack against an enemy party which had broken into our positions. He was a remarkably skilful bomb-thrower, and so continuously and accurately did he hurl his bombs that he forced the enemy to retire three hundred yards, and killed eighty of them. When the danger had passed the gallant captain fell a victim to an enemy bomb.



The Canal du Nord: Ulster and Yorkshire Troops crossing the Bapaume-Cambrai Road.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

A correspondent, describing the fighting astride of the Nord Canal, says :—

> " There were desperate duels with bombs on the dry floor of the canal, while groups of Germans and British sniped from their shelters on the banks above. The enemy tried to overwhelm the tired garrison in the night, hoping to find our men exhausted and sleeping, or overcome with gas; but their reception was always the same. A staff officer said to me, a few days later, that these men, like their comrades on the right, appeared to have solved the problem of doing without sleep. Fresh ammunition came up steadily, and the fire never slackened. Prisoners expressed amazement when they found that positions which they had vainly sought to take were held by so few men; and a German regimental commander reported that the British had received heavy reinforcements—which was not the case.
>
> " This fighting in the bed of the Nord Canal and on its banks was the strangest feature of the Battle of Cambrai. It was a battle within a battle, and when our troops came back to their present line a few days later the floor of this disused waterway was covered with German dead and wounded."

At this time a desperate struggle was taking place for the possession of that part of the Hindenburg Line which runs from Mœuvres westward to Tadpole Copse. You will remember that it was held by the right brigade of the 56th Division. The enemy made attack after attack, and actually managed to reach the headquarters of the 8th Battalion Middlesex Regiment. Assisted by the headquarters staff, the battalion made a desperate rally. By means of bombs it held off the enemy until reinforcements arrived, and the position was recovered. Every battalion in this part of the line vied with its neighbour in the valour of its resistance.

Later in the evening the enemy made another attack in force to the south-east of Mœuvres, and again managed to enter our trenches. During this attack a company of the 13th (West Ham) Battalion Essex Regiment, 2nd Division, was holding a position along the west side of the Canal du Nord. The enemy waves flowed on each side of the Essex men and cut them off. For some hours these gallant fellows held out, and about 4 p.m., seeing that relief was improbable, the two surviving officers, Lieutenant J. D. Robinson and Second-Lieutenant E. L. Corps summoned Company Sergeant-Major A. H. Edwards and Platoon Sergeants C. Phillips, F. C. Parsons, W. Fairbrass, R. Lodge, and L. S. Legg to a council of war. I need not tell you what their decision was: they determined to fight to the last, and not to think of surrender. Two runners were sent back to the battalion headquarters to inform the commanding officer of the fact, and then the men betook themselves to their rifles and bombs, and continued the struggle with unfaltering courage.

All through the night strenuous efforts were made to send assistance to these devoted men, but in vain. They fought to the death, and maintained to the last a bulwark of valour and undying resolution against the tide of attacking Germans. With their lives they barred the way, and sacrificed themselves to relieve the pressure on the main line of our defence. They fought Britain's Thermopylæ, and their glorious heroism must never be forgotten.

A correspondent thus sums up the result of the fighting on the north side of the salient :—

> "The net result of this carefully-planned German 'surprise,' which sacrificed a number of perfectly good divisions in the battle area west of Cambrai, was to give our 2nd Division a better position at the end of the battle than they held when they took over the line from the Ulsters a few days before the attack, except on the left, where the canal lock was lost. After this slight retirement the division never lost a yard of ground. Although worn out by constant fighting and digging, the men not only threw back the picked German storm troops, but pushed a fresh chain of posts into the enemy's country."

* * * * * * *

"The men who had come triumphantly through this mighty contest felt, and rightly felt, that they had won a great victory, in which the enemy had come against them in his full strength, and had been defeated with losses at which even the victors stood aghast."

In a later chapter I shall tell you how we were surprised on the southern face of the salient, and were forced to yield up about half of the ground which we had won. Though the Battle of Cambrai, which opened so brilliantly, ended in a costly reverse, nothing can ever dim the glory of the superb stand made by our troops on the northern face of the salient.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BARRING THE WAY.

IN Chapter XV. of this volume I brought the story of the Italian campaign down to the end of the first week of December. French and British reinforcements had then arrived, and had greatly encouraged our sorely-tried allies.

You will remember that after their heavy defeat at the end of October the Italians were forced to retreat to the line of the river Piave. Along this river the Third Italian Army made a gallant stand. This line, however, was only the eastern part of the front which must be held if the enemy was not to descend into the plains and make himself master of the richest part of Italy. He felt sure that if he could reach the plains Italy would be forced to make peace. He had already brought about the collapse of Russia, and he was trying hard to get Rumania to come to terms with him. If he could drive Italy out of the war, he would be able to concentrate all his forces for one last gigantic effort against the British and French on the Western front.

If you glance at the little map on page 150, you will see that the defence of the Piave line would break up altogether if the enemy could descend from the mountains between the Piave and the Adige. This mountain line had to be held at all costs. Once the Austrians and Germans could gain a footing on the plains, the line of the Piave would be turned, and the troops holding it would either be cut off or forced to retreat to the Adige. You will, therefore, not be surprised to learn that the enemy made his greatest effort to strike south from the mountains.

The sketch map on page 359 shows the line which was held by the Allies between the Piave and the Adige during the month of December. On the right, between the Piave and the Brenta, the Fourth Italian Army was stationed; and on the left, between the Brenta and the Adige, the defence was confided to the First Italian Army. I want you to notice particularly the salient about three miles west of the Piave. You see that it runs northward from Monte Tomba past Monte Spinoncia to Monte Solarolo, and then turns southward past Col dell' Orso (or Pass of the Bear) to the great mountain mass of Monte Grappa. It was against this salient that the Austro-Germans flung themselves in great force on Tuesday, 11th December. Italian scouts discovered that the enemy had massed no less than 2,500 guns on the front of less than ten miles between the Brenta and the Piave—that is, an average of one gun to every seven yards. The enemy hoped by this means to force his way to the plains before the snow began to fall and to impede his movements. The season was very late. Usually by the middle of December the Alps are ten feet deep in loose snow; so far only a sprinkling had fallen.

The enemy, however, did not rely solely upon his guns and his troops, but strove to undermine the loyalty of the Italians by dropping from his aeroplanes thousands of little illustrated books in which they were told that the British who had joined them wished to make themselves masters of North Italy. A highly-coloured picture showed a blood-spattered British officer firing with a revolver at the people of Milan, and a map of Italy was entitled, "The New English Colony." All such efforts to sow discord between the Allies failed hopelessly.

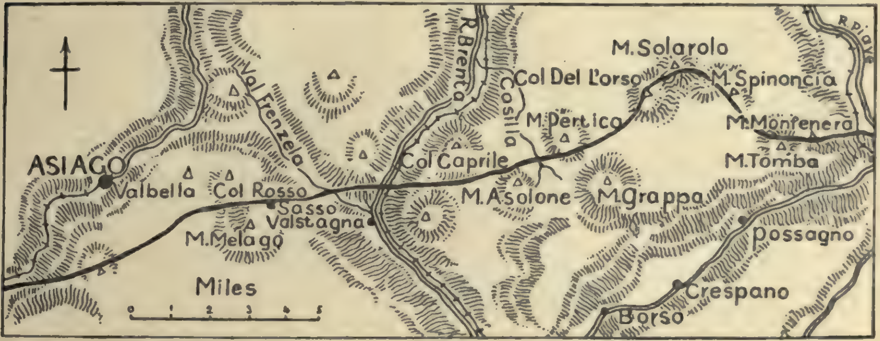
For seven days the battle raged, but up to the 18th the enemy had made but little progress on either face of the salient. On that day, however, he gave up his effort on the extreme western part of the line, and struck fiercely against the centre. Find Monte Asolone. You see that it rises about a couple of miles to the west of Monte Grappa. If the enemy could push his way down the Col Caprile and capture the mountain, the whole of the Italian line between the Piave and the Brenta would be turned. All day, Tuesday the 18th, he fiercely bombarded the Italian positions, and launched attack after attack. On the Italian left he failed, but on the right he carried Monte Asolone, and captured more than 2,000 prisoners. The success, however, was short-lived. Next day the Italians began their counter-attacks, and on Friday, the 21st, the Italian

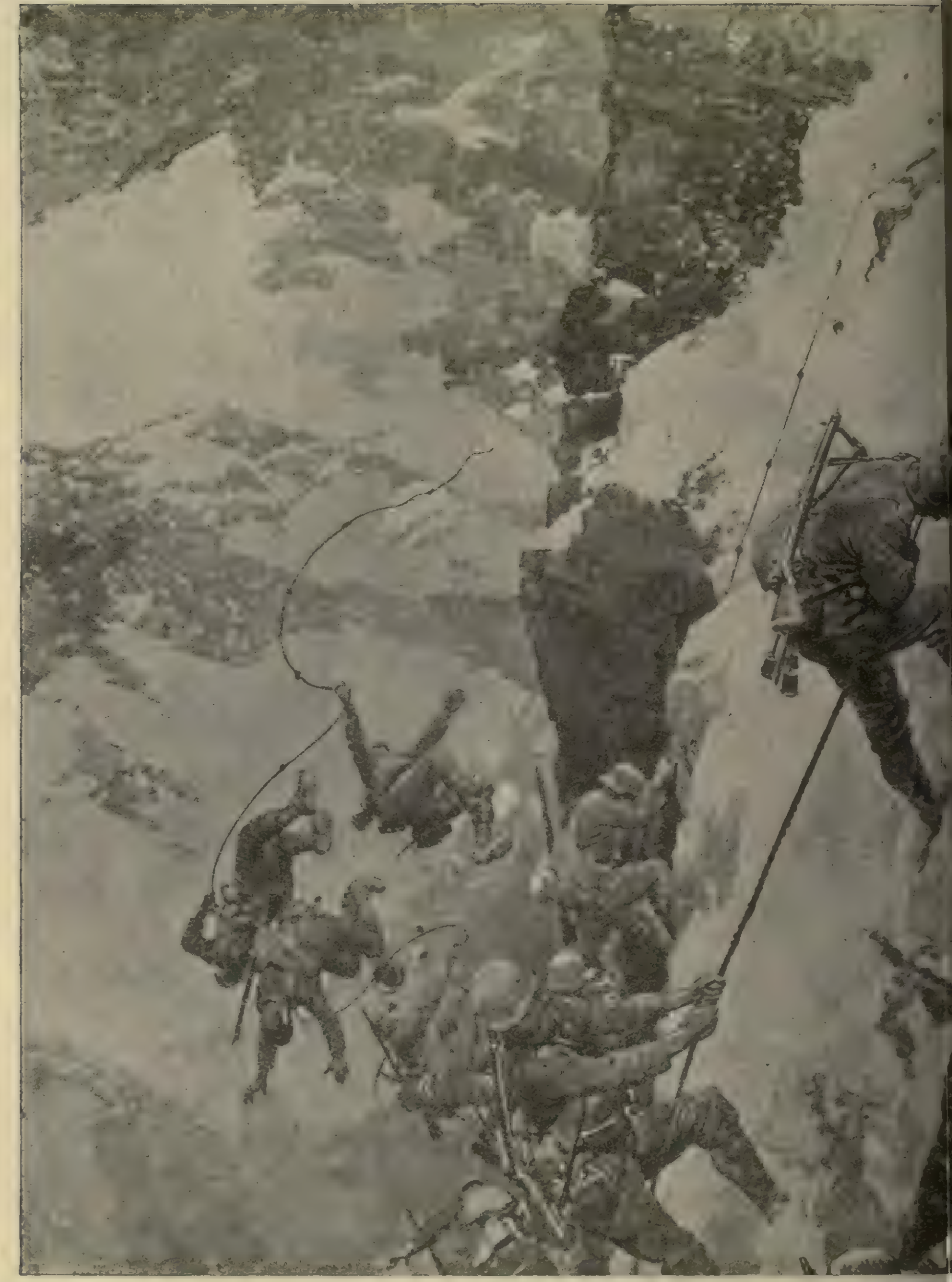
Prime Minister was able to make the following statement in the course of his speech :—

" I am proud to announce that our soldiers to-day have reconquered Monte Asolone."

General Diaz had rallied the Fourth Army, and had not only recovered the southern slopes of the mountain, but had driven the Austrians over the crest down to its northern side. This brilliant success saved the situation. Had the Austrians been able to advance from the mountain, the line of the Piave could have been held no longer.

Having failed at the Solarolo salient and at Monte Asolone, the enemy now made a bold effort to force his way along the Brenta valley. This valley is the one great avenue of approach to the plains between the Adige and the Piave. It is a wide, trench-like valley, with hills running up on either side and rising to 4,000 feet above the sea. Two excellent roads run along it, one on each side of the stream, and by means of these roads guns and wheeled vehicles of all kinds can make their way easily to the plains. The Austrian forces were assembled on the Asiago plateau, and on 23rd December a powerful attack was launched at the Italian defences on Monte Val Bella. As at Asolone, this attack was at first successful. Aided by Germans, the Austrians seized the Col del Rosso and the neighbouring heights and took 9,000 prisoners. An advance was made to within three miles west of Valstagna. Again the enemy seemed to be on the verge of victory. Next day, however, the First Italian Army turned upon him, and after a terrible struggle thrust him back to the Val Bella position. Again the Austro-Germans had been foiled.


R. Piave
R. Brenta
M.Solarolo
Col Del L'orso
M.Spinoncia
M.Pertica
M.Monfenera
M.Tomba
Val Frenzela
ASIAGO
Valbella
Col Rosso
Sasso
Valstagna
M.Melago
Col Caprile
M.Asolone
M.Grappa
Possagno
Crespano
Borso
Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5



A Band of Alpini who saved a Positio

(*From the picture by F. Matani*

Italian troops were in possession of a mountain peak which the Austrians were anxious to captu
each rope was a hook, which when the rope was hauled upwards caught and grappled the mountain sid
volunteers were called for to cut the rope. How they did so is illustrated above. The survivors of th

n face of intense Machine-gun Fire.

By permission of The Sphere.)

They held the lower ground, and endeavoured to reach the summit by means of ropes. At the end of and thus allowed the Austrians to climb up. A patrol of Alpini observed these preparations, and daring exploit were granted as a reward two days' leave.

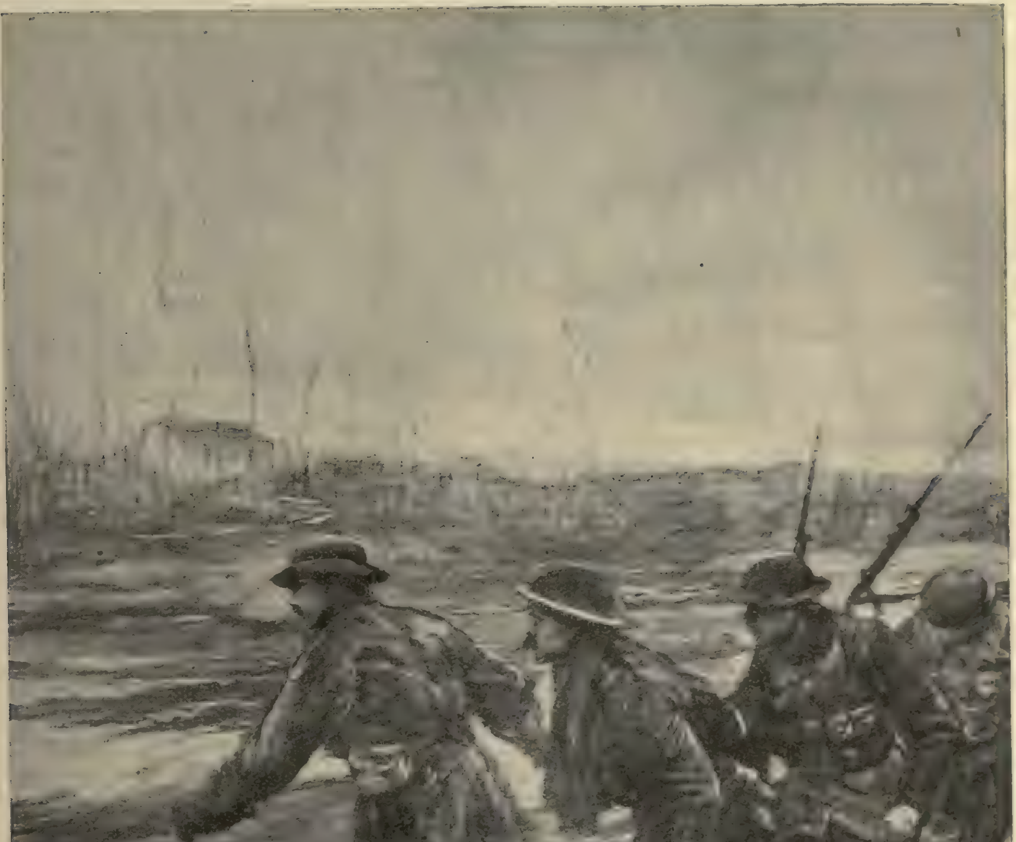
On Christmas Day they made another attempt. This time they tried to break through between the Col del Rosso and the Val Frenzela. Three divisions were detailed for the attack, but they did not advance very far. Before evening they were forced back to the positions which they held in the morning. The Italians now tried to recapture the Col del Rosso and Monte Val Bella, but failed to do so. Nevertheless, they prevented the Austrians from making a forward movement. Then the snow began to fall, and with it came relief to our weary but resolute allies.

Meanwhile British troops under General Plumer had established themselves on the Montello plateau, which you will see marked A on the map (page 150). In his first dispatch, which was dated 24th December, the general tells us that active patrol and counter-battery work had been carried out, and that our airmen had already given a good account of themselves. Some snow had fallen, and the cold was severe; but the health of our men was good, and they were greatly pleased with the recent success of their allies on Monte Asolone.

A correspondent tells us that Christmas Day was enjoyed in the old English fashion. Plum-puddings arrived on Christmas Eve, and the Christmas fare also included soup, pork, cheese, turkeys, tinned fruits, fresh fruits, figs, beer, wine, and cigarettes. The afternoon was devoted to games of all sorts, especially to football. In the evening a dramatic company gave an entertainment, and amongst the delighted audience was the Prince of Wales.

Already our men had taken their first prisoner. They had waded across the double-channelled Piave, through four or five feet of icy water, flowing in some places at a speed of fourteen miles an hour, in order to do so. The following account of this first British exploit in Italy will interest you:—

> "The patrol which went over the river last night had sent on ahead an advanced party of three or four which was groping its way across the fields on the Italian side, when it ran suddenly into a body of the enemy. It was a dark, wet night, and all that the little advance guard could see was that there were many more of the enemy than they numbered. They accordingly opened fire at once, for with a deep river at their backs the only safe policy was to make a bold show. A yell of alarm went up from the enemy; and then came the sound of stampeding feet, for the whole of the Austrian patrol took to flight without waiting to find out what was in front of them.



A Night Exploit on the Piave.

(*By permission of The Illustrated London News.*)

This picture illustrates the adventures of the patrol described on pages 362–364.

"But one of the little party of Englishmen was a keen fellow, who now saw his chance. He dropped his rifle, and ran after the enemy at top speed. After a sprint of one hundred yards he caught up with the last of the enemy, flung his arms about him, and brought him down. In this way the first prisoner was made by the British army in Italy. He turned out to be a Hungarian of German descent."

Before I close this brief account I must refer to a fine attack made by the French under General Fayolle on the last day of the year. They had been given a position extending along the right bank of the Piave, from the left of the British army, on the Montello plateau, and thence along the southern slopes of Monte Tomba to Monte Grappa. On December 31st the commander of the French division between the Piave and Monte Grappa began an assault on a picked Austrian corps which faced him. This corps had recently taken over the line from two Bavarian divisions which had suffered very heavily. The assault began with a bombardment, in which the British also took part. At the prearranged moment Chasseurs were sent forward to storm the trenches and secure the crest from Monte Tomba to Monte Monfenera. This attack was very successful. In twenty minutes the Chasseurs had won a firm footing in the Austrian positions, had captured 1,400 prisoners, sixty machine guns, and seven field guns.

On the same day the French forced the Austrians to give up the bridgehead, which they had held ever since 12th November, on the Italian side of the Piave at Zenson. Thus when the year ended the western bank of the river was clear of Austrians all the way from the sea to Monfenera. Despite repeated and costly attacks, the enemy had failed to reach the plains. So far, he had been unable to overcome the Italians either by force of arms or by attempts to undermine their loyalty.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.

IN this chapter I propose to conclude my account of the gallant and devoted men who were awarded the Victoria Cross during the year 1917.

CAPTAIN (ACTING MAJOR) OKILL MASSEY LEARMONTH, M.C., late Canadian Infantry.

When, during an enemy counter-attack, one of our posts was surprised, Captain Learmonth instantly charged, and, single-handed, drove back the attackers. Then began a furious struggle in which he fought like a Berserk of old. Although the enemy's shells were falling around him and he was mortally wounded, he stood on the parapet of his trench, and bombed the enemy in such a determined manner that his men were inspired with like valour. On several occasions he actually caught bombs thrown at him by the enemy and hurled them back. Later on he died in hospital.

CAPTAIN HENRY REYNOLDS, M.C., Royal Scots.

During an advance, enemy machine guns, installed in a "pill-box," which had been passed over by the first wave, scattered the men of Captain Reynolds's company. He rallied them, and led them in short rushes from shell-hole to shell-hole, while enemy bullets fell thick around them. When they drew near to the "pill-box" he threw a grenade, which he hoped would burst inside the little fort. The garrison, however, had blocked the entrance, and the bomb fell outside. He then crawled to the entrance and forced a phosphorous grenade inside. This set the place on fire. The survivors surrendered, and two machine guns were captured. Later, though wounded, he led his company against another objective, which he captured along with seventy prisoners and two guns.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT FREDERICK BERKS, late Australian Imperial Force.

This wonderfully cool and brave soldier, accompanied only by a corporal, rushed a strong point which was holding up our advance. When the corporal was wounded by a bomb, he went on alone, killed the Germans who were defending the position, and captured a machine gun. Shortly afterwards he led a small party against another strong point held by a garrison numbering about twenty-five. He killed many of the defenders, and captured an officer and fifteen men. While the position was being put into a state of defence he went to and fro rallying and re-forming scattered parties. As he was trying to unearth some of his men who had been buried by a bursting shell, he was killed.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT HUGH COLVIN, Cheshire Regiment.

When all the other officers of his company had fallen, and all but one in the leading company were out of action, Lieutenant Colvin took command of both companies. Observing that the battalion on his right could not advance because of enemy machine guns, he went to its assistance with a platoon, and enabled it to proceed. Then with only two men he went on to a dug-out. Leaving his men at the entrance, he descended, and brought up fourteen prisoners. Accompanied by his two companions, he next pushed forward against another dug-out, occupied by men who had been holding up the advance with rifles, machine guns, and bombs. These, too, he captured. He was then attacked by fifteen of the enemy, who, under the command of an officer, emerged from a neighbouring dug-out. One of his men was killed and the other wounded. Seizing a rifle, he shot five of the enemy; and using the body of a fallen foe as a shield, he advanced on the survivors and forced most of them to yield. In the course of the day he cleared several other dug-outs, and his total haul of prisoners amounted to fifty. Later on he very skilfully strengthened his position, and in broad daylight, with the enemy at close range, set up with his own hands a wire entanglement.

SECOND-LIEUTENANT MONTAGU SHADWORTH SEYMOUR MOORE, Hampshire Regiment.

During an advance a certain position defied our first attempt, and another attack had to be made upon it. Second-Lieutenant Moore at once volunteered for this dangerous and difficult duty. At the head of some seventy men he dashed forward, only to be met with very heavy machine-gun fire from a flank. His men fell fast, and when he had covered the five hundred yards between his starting-point and his objective, his only companions were a sergeant and four men. Nothing daunted, he at once bombed a large dug-out, and seized twenty-eight prisoners, two machine guns, and a light field gun.

Gradually reinforcements of officers and men arrived. He was "in the air," for the troops which were to support him on the right had not advanced. Nevertheless the little company dug a trench, and though attacked during the night by enemy bombing parties, maintained the position until daylight. Then the bombing attacks began again, and Lieutenant Moore was forced to retire for a short distance. Seizing the opportunity of a lull in the attack, he recaptured the trench, and armed his men with enemy rifles in place of their own, which had been smashed. He also discovered a store of bombs, and thus was enabled to beat off another counter-attack. The enemy now shelled the trench for thirty-six hours on end, until only ten men out of those who began the operation were left. It was impossible to hold out any longer. Fortunately a thick mist now settled down upon the battlefield, and thus concealed from the eyes of the enemy he was able to withdraw his men and carry back his wounded.

COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR ROBERT HANNA, Canadian Infantry.

A strong point, heavily protected by wire and mounting a machine gun, had beaten off three attempts which we had made to capture it. Many of our men had been killed or wounded. Company Sergeant-Major Hanna, despite heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, coolly collected a group of men, and at their head broke through the wire and sprang into the trench, where a furious hand-to-hand combat took place. Our hero fought magnificently. He bayoneted three of the enemy and brained a fourth. To his splendid gallantry and determined courage we owed a position of great importance.

SERGEANT ALFRED JOSEPH KNIGHT, London Regiment.

Sergeant Knight, who was a native of Nottingham, won the premier award of valour for a series of single-handed fights in which he displayed amazing courage and skill. While his platoon was attacking an enemy strong point he rushed through our own barrage, bayoneted the machine gunner who was holding up the attack, and seized the weapon. Later on he came across twelve Germans armed with a machine gun and hidden in a shell-hole. He dashed in amongst them, bayoneted two of them, shot a third, and scattered the rest. Some time later, when an attempt was being made to capture a fortified farm, he was bogged up to the waist. While in this plight he saw a number of the enemy firing on our troops. Without waiting to extricate himself, he began sniping these snipers, and killed six of them. Noticing a company held up by a fortified farm on his right flank, he collected some men, and so skilfully disposed them that the place was captured. Finally, when all the platoon officers of his company had fallen, he took command, and made the captured positions secure. By his prompt and rapid action, his wonderful courage, and his contempt for danger, this gallant sergeant proved himself a "very parfit gentil Knight."

SERGEANT JAMES OCKENDEN, Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Sergeant Ockenden, while advancing with his company, saw a platoon on his right held up by an enemy machine gun. He immediately rushed it, and killed the crew, with the exception of one man who got away. The gallant sergeant immediately pursued the fugitive, and when far ahead of his companions, caught him up and killed him. He then led a section against a fortified farm, and when the garrison refused to surrender, opened fire on them. Four fell, and the remainder surrendered.

PRIVATE MICHAEL JAMES O'ROURKE, Canadian Infantry.

For three days and nights this heroic stretcher-bearer worked unceasingly in bringing the fallen into safety. During the whole of this time shells were bursting around him and bullets were whistling past him. Several times he was knocked down and partly buried by enemy shells. Seeing a comrade who had been blinded stumbling to and fro in front of his trench, he dashed out in full view of the enemy's snipers and brought the man in safely. Shortly afterwards he went forward for about fifty yards in front of our barrage on the same errand of mercy. When our advanced posts had fallen back he pushed forward a third time and brought back a wounded man who had been left behind. I think you will agree that few heroes better deserved their reward than this simple private, who, without a single thought for his own safety, faced shot and shell in order to rescue the wounded and succour the dying.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S CAMBRAI DISPATCH.

IN foregoing chapters I have told you the story of the first part of the Cambrai battle as related by the correspondents with our forces. On March 5, 1918, Sir Douglas Haig's Cambrai dispatch was published in our newspapers, and we were afforded an opportunity of seeing the great fight through the eyes of our Commander-in-Chief. In this chapter I propose to take you through his dispatch, and thus to give you the official account of what I have called the greatest battle of the war since the German defeat on the Marne.

Sir Douglas Haig begins by telling us that his object was to gain a local success by a sudden attack at a point where the enemy did not expect it. Our offensive in Flanders and the campaigns of our Allies elsewhere had forced the Germans to collect large forces on the threatened fronts. They were only able to do this by weakening their line in certain sectors. One of the sectors thus weakened was that in front of Cambrai. In this part of the line the ground was favourable for the employment of the Tanks which he meant to use in his great surprise.

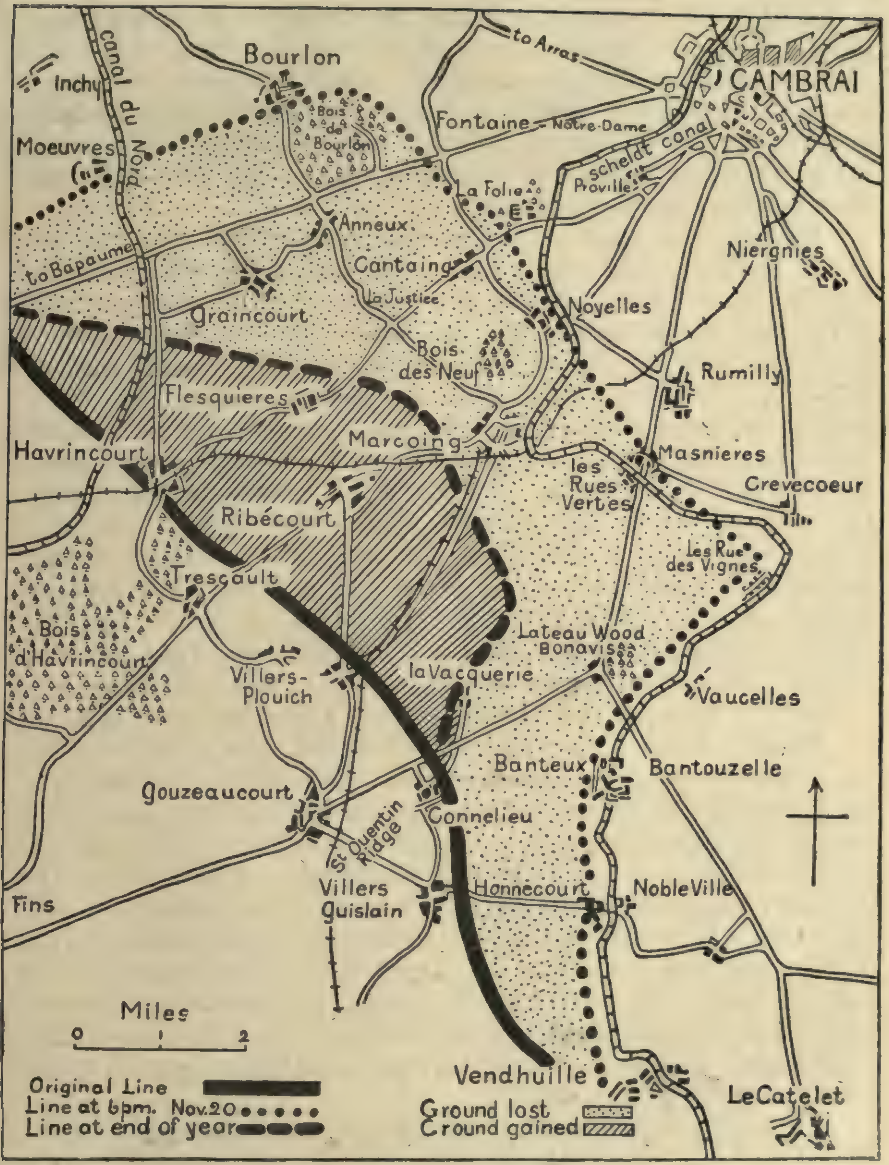
His plan of campaign was as follows. If he could break through the Hindenburg Line in front of Cambrai, he proposed to capture Bourlon Hill, and to establish a good flank position to the east in the direction of Cambrai. This done, he would be able to push forward to the north between Bourlon and the river Sensée. If a sufficiently deep wedge could be thrust into the German positions in this direction, the enemy would be forced to abandon his defences for many a mile. You observe that the capture of Cambrai itself was not the primary object of the attack.

Sir Douglas Haig next proceeds to tell us why he struck his sudden blow so late in the year. While the Flanders battle was proceeding the Germans were laying out fresh lines of defence behind the Hindenburg Line, and it was supposed that, as soon as the Ypres fighting came to an end, enemy troops would be brought from the north and placed in these new positions. The Germans had already shifted large forces from Russia, and no doubt many more troops would be transferred from East to West during the winter. Further, the enemy divisions in the West were tired, and a postponement of the attack to the new year would give them the winter's rest in which to recover their strength. All the conditions were favourable for a surprise, and if we did not move at once many months might elapse before such an opportunity occurred again.

Such were the arguments for immediate action. What was there to consider on the other side? Our troops had been engaged for many months in heavy fighting, and though they had been successful their strength had been greatly taxed. Further, only part of the losses in the various divisions so engaged had been replaced, and many of the new drafts were not fully trained. It was, therefore, a serious matter to make a further heavy call on our troops at the end of a hard-fought year. On the other hand, the forces which could be employed would not be numerous; for success depended on secrecy, and the bringing together of large masses of men would inform the enemy that an attack was pending. After carefully weighing the pros and cons, Sir Douglas Haig decided to undertake the great adventure without delay.

He had learned that if his secret could be kept no hostile reinforcements would be able to reach the scene of action for forty-eight hours after the commencement of the attack. He therefore decided that for forty-eight hours the troops were to go forward. At the end of that time, or even before, if the results were not favourable, the advance was to be stopped. It was only to proceed if a promising success was won in the first two days.

You already know that the novel feature of the attack was the employment of Tanks to play the part of artillery and smash through the enemy's wire. When the Tanks and the infantry, working together, began to press forward, then, and only then, would the artillery assist by creating a barrage, and by engaging the enemy's batteries. If Tanks, infantry, and


CAMBRAI
to Arras
Bourlon
Inchy
canal du Nord
Moeuvres
Bois de Bourlon
Fontaine - Notre-Dame
scheldt canal
La Folie
Proville
Anneux
to Bapaume
Cantaing
La Justice
Niergnies
Graincourt
Noyelles
Bois des Neuf
Rumilly
Flesquieres
Marcoing
Havrincourt
Masnieres
les Rues Vertes
Crevecoeur
Ribécourt
Les Rue des Vignes
Trescault
Lateau Wood
Bonavis
Bois d'Havrincourt
Villers-Plouich
la Vacquerie
Vaucelles
Banteux
Bantouzelle
Gouzeaucourt
Gonnelieu
St Quentin Ridge
Villers Guislain
Honnecourt
Noble Ville
Fins
Miles
0
1
2
Vendhuille
LeCatelet
Original Line
Line at 6pm. Nov.20
Line at end of year
Ground lost
Ground gained

Map of the Cambrai Salient.

This map shows the British line at the beginning of the battle, the extreme limit of the advance, and the line which roughly corresponds to the Hindenburg Reserve Line, to which we had retired by the morning of 7th December. This retiral was forced on us because the south-east face of the salient, from Bonavis Ridge to Gonnelieu, gave way under a German surprise attack delivered on 30th November. The ground won and lost is indicated by shading.

artillery could break through all the enemy's lines of defence on the first day, cavalry were to advance in order to raid the German communications, damage the railways, and interfere as much as possible with the arrival of reinforcements. All the commanders were warned that everything depended on secrecy up to the very moment of starting, and after that, on bold, determined, and rapid action.

At 6.20 on the morning of 20th November, without any previous artillery bombardment, the Tanks and infantry went forward on a front of about six miles, extending from east of Gonnelieu to the Canal du Nord, opposite Hermies. As soon as they started gas and smoke were discharged along almost the whole of the British front south of the Scarpe, and the artillery opened fire. On the principal front the Tanks crashed through the enemy's wire, forming great lanes through which the infantry could pass. Protected by smoke barrages from the view of the enemy gunners, they rolled across the Hindenburg trenches, smashing up the machine guns and driving his infantry to ground. Close behind the Tanks our infantry followed, " mopping up " the trenches. In this way the advance and the main system of the Hindenburg Line were overrun, and an attack was made upon the reserve line.

In this advance the 12th (Eastern) Division, moving along the Bonavis Ridge on the right of our attack, had a hard struggle at Lateau Wood, in which a number of German batteries had been installed. Fierce fighting, in which infantry and Tank crews displayed the greatest gallantry, continued throughout the morning at this point, and ended in the capture of the position, together with the enemy's guns. Meanwhile the 20th Division, which had seized La Vacquerie at the opening of the attack, stormed the powerful defences of Welsh Ridge. The 6th Division, after sharp fighting among the streets and houses, carried the village of Ribecourt, while the 62nd (West Riding Territorial) Division stormed Havrincourt, where parties of the enemy held out for a time.

The capture of these two villages secured the flanks of the 51st (Highland Territorial) Division, which advanced up the slopes of Flesquières Hill against the German trench lines on the south side of the village. Here very heavy fighting took place. The stout brick wall skirting the grounds of the chateau proved a formidable barrier, and German machine guns swept the ground in front of it. Nevertheless, we gained all the defences in the area, with the exception of the village itself, before midday. It was at Flesquières that several hits were made on our Tanks. A German artillery officer at this point behaved with the utmost bravery, and won the admiration of our men. He remained alone with his battery, which he served single-handed, and did not cease firing until he fell beside his gun. A correspondent gives us a few further details regarding this valiant German :—

> " This officer was an ober-leutnant, and was in command of a party serving an anti-Tank gun. An almost direct hit from one of our guns wiped out four of his party of eight, and severely wounded him. He stuck to his post, however, and his remaining men continued to fire away at point-blank range at the advancing Tanks. Machine-gun fire accounted for the survivors, and again severely wounded the officer. Nevertheless, he continued, single-handed, to serve his gun. No fewer than eight direct hits did he unaided obtain on eight separate Tanks, putting them out of action. Time after time he was hit by splinters of shells and by machine-gun bullets, but he still stuck to his work. At last a shell exploding close beside him so wounded him that he was unable to rise oft the ground. But even then he made one last effort to fire the gun which he had just loaded. A direct hit, however, from a Tank put an end to all opposition; and when our men passed by the spot, no trace of either officer or gun could be found.
>
> " An eye-witness said: ' Our men were almost sorry they had to put him out like that, for he deserved to live. It was, I think, the finest piece of heroism I have ever seen.' "

On the left of our attack, west of the Canal du Nord, the 36th (Ulster) Division captured a spoil bank, and pushed northward in touch with the West Riding troops who had taken Havrincourt. By 10.30 a.m. we were on our way to the Hindenburg Reserve Line, and cavalry were moving up behind our infantry. Before long, Tanks and their followers of the famous 29th Division, which had won imperishable renown in Gallipoli, entered Masnières, captured Marcoing and Neuf Wood, and thus secured the passages of the Scheldt Canal at both villages.

At Marcoing the Tanks arrived just as a party of the enemy was in the act of running out wires to blow up one of the bridges by electricity. The Tank opened fire on the party, and drove it off, thus securing the bridge intact. At Masnières, however, the enemy was able to destroy partially the bridge crossing the main road. The first Tank which endeavoured to cross at this point fell through the bridge, and thus completed its destruction.

As the advance of a number of our guns had been delayed in the sunken roads of this part of the battlefield, and the bridge had broken down, the infantry had to go on beyond Masnières without the assistance of Tanks or guns, and were not able at first to clear the enemy entirely from the northern portion of the village. Parties of Germans held out during the afternoon, and enabled their comrades to come up and occupy Rumilly and a section of the line to the south of it. The destruction of the bridge prevented our cavalry from crossing the canal in sufficient strength to overcome the resistance; nevertheless a squadron of the Fort Garry Horse, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, managed to get across by a temporary bridge which was constructed during the day. This gallant squadron pushed through the German lines north of Masnières, and captured a German battery. Then riding on, it dispersed a body of about three hundred Germans, and did not call a halt until the greater part of its horses had been killed or wounded. The dismounted men took up a position in a sunken road, and fought on until nightfall, when they withdrew to our lines, bringing with them several prisoners. The Fort Garry Horse were the heroes of the White Arm that day.

During the afternoon, patrols of the 6th Division entered Noyelles, and, reinforced by cavalry, pushed towards Cantaing. The 62nd Division, advancing from Havrincourt, captured Graincourt, where the Tanks destroyed two anti-Tank guns. Before nightfall, infantry and cavalry had entered Anneux, though the enemy in this village was not thoroughly overcome until the following morning. The advance of the 62nd Division was the most brilliant achievement of the day. It pushed forward four and a half miles from its starting-point, and in the course of its advance overran two German systems of defence and captured three villages.

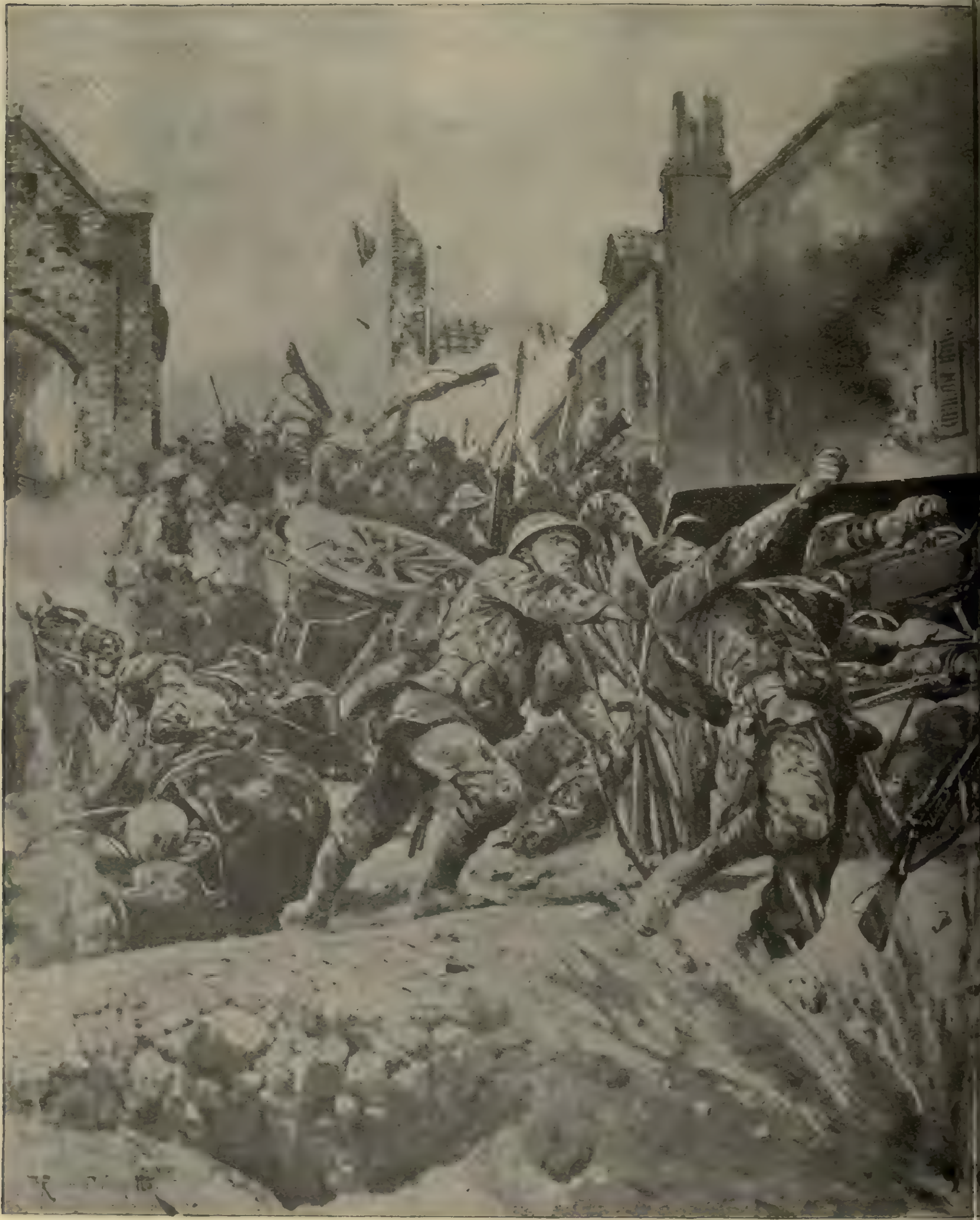
On the left flank of our attack Ulster battalions pushed northward along the Hindenburg Line and its forward defences, and, keeping touch with the West Riding troops, carried the whole of the German trench systems west of the Canal du Nord as far as the Bapaume-Cambrai road.

At the end of the first day of the attack three German lines of defence had been broken through to a depth of some four and a half miles on a wide front, and over five thousand prisoners had been brought in. But for the wrecking of the bridge at Masnières and the check at Flesquières still greater results might have been attained. Sir Douglas Haig, at this point in his narrative, pauses to pay a warm tribute to the Tanks. Without their aid an opening could not have been secretly made through the German wire. Praise is also given to the Royal Flying Corps for very gallant and valuable work carried out amidst low clouds and driving mist.

Next morning the attack on Flesquières was resumed. By eight o'clock this obstacle to our advance had been removed, and the whole line went forward once more. By eleven our troops had established themselves east and north of Masnières, and had beaten off a heavy counter-attack from the direction of Rumilly. As the day wore on the counter-attacks increased in vigour, and held us up in this part of the line. Progress, however, was made towards Crèvecœur; and during the afternoon the canal was crossed, but the passage of the river was found to be impossible in face of the enemy's machine-gun fire. Our men were now becoming exhausted, and no further headway was made in this direction.

At 10.30 the 51st and 62nd Divisions, along with Tanks and cavalry, made a push towards Fontaine-notre-Dame and Bourlon. They completed the capture of Anneux, seized Cantaing, made progress on the outskirts of Bourlon Wood, and in the afternoon captured Fontaine. The attack on Bourlon Wood itself was checked by machine-gun fire, though Tanks advanced some distance amidst the trees. Meanwhile the 36th Division, advancing north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road, reached the southern outskirts of Mœuvres, where it met with a strong resistance.

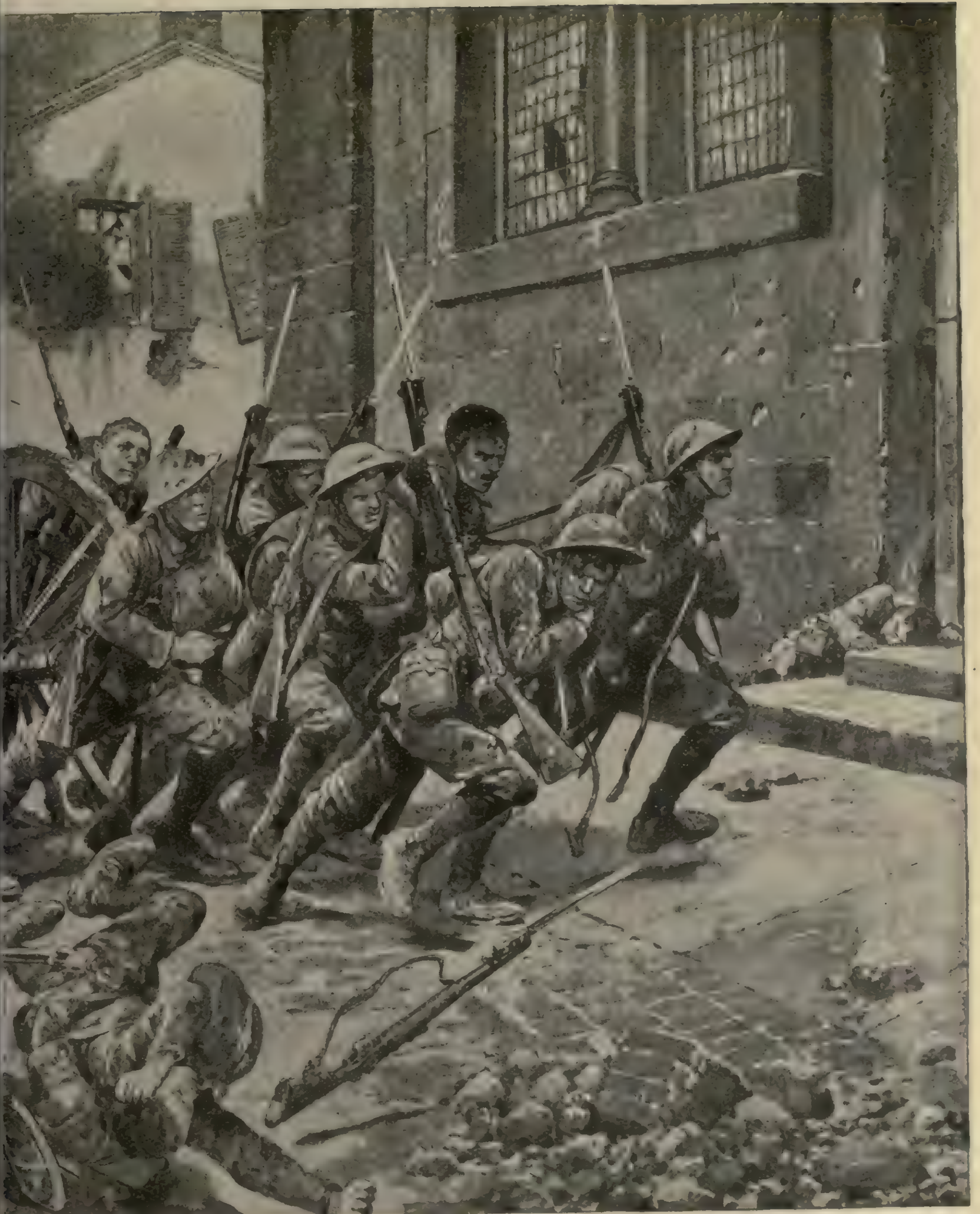
The forty-eight hours during which the enemy could not bring his reserves into the fight had now expired, and we had not yet cleared the Germans from the high ground at Bourlon village and wood, nor from other important points in the neighbourhood. Sir Douglas Haig had now to decide whether he would proceed with the attack or withdraw. He could not stand fast on the line which he had won, because the enemy on the Bourlon Ridge commanded his positions round Flesquières. Further, he knew that if he continued to press on he would help the Italians by preventing the enemy



The Guards at Gouzeaucourt

(From the picture by R. Caton Woodville.

When the Germans suddenly drove through our positions on the south-eastern face of the salient, th
recaptured Gouzeaucourt, and pushed up the St. Quentin Ridge to the east of the village. Our illustratio
In their advance on Gouzeaucourt the Guards were met by the fiercest machine-gun fire. Neverthele
close quarters against snipers, machine gunners, and bodies of riflemen under cover of walls.



manhauling a Gun into Safety.

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Guards, who were in reserve, were brought up. **In the most heroic fashion they counter-attacked,** shows some of them saving one of our guns while their comrades are stemming the onset of the Germans. they fought their way into the village and beyond it, and drove out the enemy after a hard struggle **at** from sending further help to North Italy. So, though his troops were worn out and the German reinforcements were coming up, he decided to make a big effort to seize Bourlon Ridge.

The 22nd November was spent in trench-digging and in giving the troops a much-needed rest. Soon after midday the enemy regained Fontaine; but as our men still held the outskirts of Bourlon Wood and Cantaing, it was thought that its recapture would not be difficult. That night a battalion of the Queen's Westminsters carried Tadpole Copse, which would form a valuable point on our left flank if the Bourlon position could be secured.

On the morning of the 23rd, the 51st Division, supported by Tanks, attacked Fontaine, but could not force an entrance. Early in the afternoon another attempt was made, and a number of Tanks pushed into the village, where they remained until nightfall. The village, however, was not cleared, and at the close of the day no progress had been made on this part of our front.

At 10.30 a.m. the 40th Division attacked Bourlon Wood, and after four and a half hours of hard fighting, in which the Tanks played a leading part, the whole of the wood was captured, and we entered Bourlon village. Heavy counter-attacks now held us up, though we beat them off time after time. Thereafter for several days fierce fighting went on, and English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish battalions, together with dismounted cavalry, performed most gallant service, and inflicted heavy loss on the enemy. At the end of five days of incessant struggle we still held a strong position on the hill and in the wood, but had not succeeded in gaining all the ground which would enable us to hold on securely to our gains.

During the two following days there was a lull. The troops which had borne the brunt of the heaviest struggle were relieved, and preparations were made for a new attack. Meanwhile, as rapidly as possible, our line was being put into a condition of defence. By the end of November we had taken more than 10,500 prisoners, had seized 142 guns, some 350 machine guns, and 70 trench mortars, together with great quantities of ammunition, material, and stores of all kinds.

The Battle of Cambrai had so far resulted in victory. We are now to hear how in its later stages we suffered a serious reverse. During the last days of November there were many signs that the enemy was about to make a big effort to regain the positions which we had wrested from him. He was massing his infantry apparently for an attack upon the high ground about Bourlon. Fresh divisions had been sent up to this sector, and the Commander-in-Chief felt confident that we could hold our own in this part of the line. He was equally confident that the sector from Cantaing to Banteux could be held, even though the five divisions holding the line were weary with continual fighting.

From Banteux southward the front was weakly held, and our troops were thinly spread over extended ground. We must, however, remember that this southern part of our line had been in our hands for several months, and that its defences were more complete and better organized than those on the newly won ground. Further, the capture of Bonavis Ridge had added to the security of our positions farther south. The reserves in this area consisted of the Guards and the 2nd Cavalry Division, both of which had been engaged in the recent fighting at Fontaine and Bourlon Wood. They were stationed behind the front from La Vacquerie to Villers-Guislain, while the 62nd Division, which also had been recently engaged, was held in reserve in the direction of the Bapaume-Cambrai road. A fresh South Midland Division was assembling farther back, and three other cavalry divisions were only a few hours distant. The troops holding this weak part of our line were warned to expect attack ; additional machine guns were placed in positions where they could lend special support, and divisional reserves were moved up. Patrols were also sent out to watch the enemy, and to report any sign of advance.

We now come to the 30th November, a day of glory, but also a day of disaster. Between seven and eight in the morning, after a short but very heavy bombardment, the enemy attacked on a front of some ten miles from Vendhuille to Masnières. From Masnières to Banteux four German divisions were probably employed against three British divisions. Between Banteux and Vendhuille one German division and portions of two others were hurled against the northern half of one British division. On the Masnières front the famous 29th Division—composed of English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Guernsey, and Newfoundland battalions—was seriously threatened as the day wore on by the progress made by the enemy farther south. Its batteries were taken in reverse; nevertheless it resisted most gallantly, and beat off one powerful assault after another. At the end of the day the line of the 29th Division was intact.

It was at the northern end of the Bonavis Ridge, and in the Gonnelieu sector, that we suffered disaster. So swiftly did the enemy's battalions advance after his opening bombardment that our troops appear to have been overwhelmed almost before they realized that the attack had begun. The bombardment was heavy enough to make them take to their dug-outs, but not so heavy as to seriously alarm them at first. They saw no steadily-advancing barrage to warn them that the Germans were coming on. The enemy's columns had assembled secretly in the many deep folds and hollows of the chalk hills, and our airmen had been prevented by the early morning mist from spying them out.

The attack came with great suddenness. As the Germans approached our trenches, swarms of their low-flying aeroplanes swooped down on our positions and rained machine-gun fire upon our infantry. At the same time smoke shells and showers of bombs raised such a dense cloud that our men could not see what was happening on other parts of the battlefield or follow the movements of the enemy. Just as we had surprised the Germans on the morning of the 20th they now surprised us.

Nevertheless, though our lines were broken, parties of our troops cut off from their fellows made a stubborn resistance. Our machine-gun detachments in the neighbourhood of Lateau Wood, to the south-east of La Vacquerie, and at other points played their part manfully, and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy at short range. North-east of La Vacquerie the 92nd Field Artillery Brigade beat back four attacks, during which some of the enemy's infantry approached to within two hundred yards of our guns. Only then did the surviving gunners withdraw, after removing the breech-blocks from their pieces, and thus rendering them useless. East of Villers-Guislain the troops holding forward positions on the high ground were still making a stout fight, though large bodies of German infantry had advanced up the valley between them and the village. A post known as Limerick Post, and lying to the south of the village, though heavily assailed time after time, was held throughout the day by troops of the 1/5th Battalion (King's Own) Royal Lancaster Regiment and the 1/10th Battalion Liverpool Regiment.

The enemy pushed on across the northern end of Bonavis Ridge and up the deep gully towards Villers-Guislain and Gonnelieu, and by so doing turned our positions both on the ridge and in the two villages. Taken in flank and rear, the defences of Villers-Guislain, Gonnelieu, and Bonavis were rapidly overrun. Then the enemy pushed into Gouzeaucourt, which he captured by nine o'clock. He also seized a number of our guns, which had been brought up close to the line in order that they could cover the battle front about Masnières and Marcoing.

The enemy had now reached the high-water mark of his success. Our local reserves near Gouzeaucourt held up his advance, and meanwhile additional troops were hurried up with all speed. About midday the Guards appeared west of Gouzeaucourt, while cavalry moved up to close the gap on their right, and advanced towards Villers-Guislain from the south and south-west.

The Guards, true to their grand old traditions, advanced as steadily as though on parade. With the greatest gallantry and resolution they drove the enemy right out of Gouzeaucourt, and pushed up the St. Quentin Ridge to the east of the village. They were ably assisted by a party of the 29th Division, which, along with a company of North Midland Royal Engineers, held on to a position in an old trench near Gouzeaucourt and refused to be ousted. Valuable work was also done by a brigade of field artillery of the 47th Division, which was on the march when the alarming news reached them that the Germans had broken through. They moved direct into action, and got their guns going in record time. During the afternoon three battalions of Tanks came into the fray. They were on the way to the rear to refit when they heard of the attack. Immediately they made for Gouzeaucourt, and aided the infantry to hold the recaptured ground. An Indian cavalry regiment displayed such gallantry on the occasion that the Guards afterwards presented it with a service of plate. Meanwhile the defence of La Vacquerie had been successfully maintained.

I shall not trouble you with Sir Douglas Haig's account of the superb stand made by our troops on the northern face of the salient. I have already devoted a chapter to this stubborn resistance. "But for their steady courage and staunchness in defence," says the Commander-in-Chief, "the success gained by the enemy on the right of our battle front might have had serious consequences."

On 1st December fierce fighting continued on the whole front. The Guards completed the capture of Quentin Ridge, and recovered Gonnelieu, where they captured over three hundred and fifty prisoners and many machine guns. Tanks greatly assisted in the recovery of the ridge. At one point where our infantry were held up by fire from a hostile trench, a single Tank made for the position, and, firing up and down it, inflicted great loss on the enemy. When our infantry pushed into it they found it full of dead, and also discovered fifteen machine guns that had been silenced by the Tank. Farther south Tanks also played a leading part in capturing Gauche Wood. When the Guards and dismounted cavalry entered the wood, they found great numbers of German dead and many smashed machine guns. In one spot four machine guns, with their crews lying around them, were seen within a radius of twenty yards. In front of La Vacquerie, however, the Tanks were held up, and could not proceed.

Now that Bonavis Ridge was in the hands of the enemy, Masnières was exposed to attack on three sides, and could not be held. On the night of the 1st–2nd December our troops were withdrawn to a line west of the village. The enemy had not yet shot his bolt. He heavily attacked Welsh Ridge, Masnières, and Bourlon; and though his assaults were broken by our machine-gun fire, he gradually gained ground on Welsh Ridge. By nightfall we had been pushed back to the west and north of Gonnelieu. Next day the enemy renewed his attacks all along the line, and won La Vacquerie. The assaults still continued, and our positions beyond the Scheldt Canal were too much exposed to be maintained. During the night our men were ordered to fall back to the west bank of the canal.

Exhausted by his fierce attacks and disheartened by his awful losses, the enemy relaxed his efforts; but renewed them again on 5th December and the two following days, when he strove without success to drive us off Welsh Ridge. Sir Douglas

Haig now saw that only by long and costly fighting could he recapture Bonavis Ridge. Unless this was done, his troops in the salient north of Flesquières would be in a dangerous situation, even if he could maintain his hold on Bourlon Hill. He therefore decided to withdraw from the position north of the Flesquières Ridge. The troops began to retire, and on the morning of the 7th reached their new positions without interference from the enemy. Before retiring they destroyed all their field defences, and rendered useless the guns which they could not remove.

Much skill and courage were shown by our covering troops during the withdrawal. On the afternoon of 6th December two companies of the 1/15th Battalion London Regiment, 47th Division, when greatly reduced in strength by the fighting at Bourlon Wood, found while retiring near Graincourt that they were being gradually surrounded. With splendid courage they cut their way through the German lines, and reached our advanced position in good order, after having taken heavy toll of the enemy. Our new line corresponded roughly with the old Hindenburg Reserve Line. You can follow it for yourselves on the map (page 371).

What was the net result of the three weeks' fighting described in this chapter? We had captured and held 12,000 yards of the former German front line from La Vacquerie to the Canal du Nord, about two and a half miles north of Havrincourt. We had captured 11,100 German prisoners and 145 guns. On the other hand, the enemy had taken from us an important section of our front line between Vendhuille and Gonnelieu, and had captured some 9,000 of our men, as well as a large number of guns. Though loss had succeeded gain, we had undoubtedly helped our sore-beset Allies in Italy. We had forced the enemy to push certain of his divisions intended for the Italian front into the fiery furnace in front of Cambrai, and had prevented him from reinforcing his troops in North Italy for at least two weeks. Remember that this was done during the very critical time when the Italians were making their first stand on the Piave line.

Sir Douglas Haig concludes his dispatch by giving his reasons for continuing the fight after November 21st. He confesses that on the 30th of November he took risks at some points in order to increase his strength at other points. He threw in his reserves on the Bourlon front, and there his three divisions held their own against the seven German divisions sent against them. Between Masnières and Vendhuille we fought against odds of about four to three, and the enemy's partial success was due to our insufficient numbers, to the lack of training of our men, and to the exhaustion which was the result of the hard previous fighting. Though our troops gave way for a time in one area, the weak forces still left and the reserves within reach made a great recovery, and displayed great gallantry, promptness, and skill.

Finally, Sir Douglas Haig tells us that the sudden breaking through of an immense system of defences by our troops had a most inspiring effect upon them and an equally depressing effect upon the enemy. The great value of the Tanks had been proved beyond doubt. After the enemy's experiences in front of Cambrai Sir Douglas Haig was sure that he would hesitate before he again weakened any part of his front in order to set free troops for a big attack elsewhere.

* * * * * * *

So with the story of a victory and a reverse our record of the year 1917 comes to an end. Though the year had closed with a set-back, no Briton had lost one shred of faith in the gallant men who were upholding the cause of their country on the battlefield. All knew that misfortunes must be expected in war; that no campaign is a continuous success; and that every wise commander learns valuable lessons from his failures. Though we had passed through a year of grievous disappointment and grave anxiety, our confidence in ultimate victory had not been shaken. True to the British tradition, our people at home set a stout heart to a stey brae, and steeled their resolution to bear grimly those trials and to make cheerfully those sacrifices without which success could not be attained. The nation still stood firm, relying upon the undoubted justice of its cause, the steadfast endurance of its people, and the superb courage of its fighting men.

END OF VOL. VIII.

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